THE MOST SIGNIFICANT — AND DRAMATIC — event of 1993 was the signing of a historic “Declaration of Principles” by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at a White House ceremony in Washington, D.C., on September 13. This astonishing document was the result of months of extraordinary secret negotiations, known only to a handful of people, that took place in Oslo, Norway, even as the formal peace talks being fitfully pursued by Israel and the PLO showed virtually no progress. The second major event of the year was the signing of a “Fundamental Agreement” with the Vatican on December 30, which granted Israel the official diplomatic recognition it had long sought.

Although both agreements marked important steps toward the normalization of Israel’s status in the region and in the international community, the immediate consequences inside Israel failed to live up to the initial optimism. Mounting Palestinian terrorism inside Israel as well as in the territories was exploited by the political right to set public opinion against the agreement with the PLO. Continual setbacks in the talks to implement the accord contributed to growing doubts about its feasibility. Domestic disarray, combined with these other factors, effectively left Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin with a minority government, such that at year’s end, he began to project a sense of uncertainty and indecisiveness that only played into the hands of those who denounced the government’s policies.

DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Peace Process

In retrospect, a crucial step toward the signing of the Declaration of Principles with the PLO took place one day before the start of the first round of the secret Oslo talks that ultimately produced the agreement (see below). On January 19, the Knesset, by a vote of 39–20, repealed the ban on meetings between Israelis and members of groups previously defined by the government as “terrorist organizations.” Israelis could now meet legally with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

By this time, about half a year into the government’s term of office, Rabin had reached the conclusion that if he were to make good on his election promises about
making peace, the Syrian track held out greater potential for a breakthrough. Although he had pledged to reach an agreement with the Palestinians within nine months of taking office, Rabin was aware that the Palestinian negotiators to the bilateral talks in Washington (within the framework of the Madrid conference of 1991) were in reality little more than puppets of the PLO in Tunis. Damascus needed to consult with no one, and if an agreement with President Hafez al-Assad were achieved, the others would fall quickly into line. Rabin believed that progress could be made if Syria would agree to secret or informal contacts with Israel, with the United States as an active intermediary. After all, Washington considered Syria the key player in the conflict, and the Syrians, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, were more than interested in ingratiating themselves with the Americans, not least to be removed from the State Department's list of countries involved in international terrorism, a status with adverse economic and other repercussions.

In the meantime, the Clinton administration declared its commitment to the peace process and the Madrid framework. To show that he meant business, President Bill Clinton sent Secretary of State Warren Christopher on a Middle East tour almost immediately after taking office.

Christopher's First Visit

Israel and Syria were caught in a variation of the "chicken-or-egg" conundrum. Damascus insisted on an up-front Israeli pledge to withdraw from the entire Golan Heights, while Israel balked at saying anything about territory before Syria elaborated on its conception of the "content of peace." In the meantime, Rabin, keeping a close eye on the polls and aware of the psychological-emotional significance which the Golan Heights held for most Israelis, explained that when he spoke of an Israeli withdrawal in the context of a peace with Syria, he meant a withdrawal on and not from the Golan Heights. That message was unacceptable to both Damascus, which demanded an "Egyptian-style" agreement (meaning a total Israeli withdrawal and the destruction of the settlements, based on the Likud's precedent in Sinai), and the well-organized and highly vocal Golan settlers and their many supporters.

Secretary of State Christopher arrived in Israel on February 22 at the conclusion of a regional tour that also took him to five Arab countries. In his airport statement, Christopher referred to "the help of the United States as a full partner" in focusing the process "on the substance and structure of real peace through direct negotiations." Perhaps equally important, Christopher said after his talks with Prime Minister Rabin that the two had formed a "close and personal" relationship. The "chemistry was excellent," added U.S. ambassador to Israel William Harrop.

Rabin's chemistry with some of his former supporters — Labor had established most of the settlements on the Golan Heights and a good number of Labor MKs objected to a withdrawal from the Golan — was not so excellent. On February 23, thousands of demonstrators marched through Jerusalem to demand that Israel not return the area to Syria. Rabin was called a "traitor" — an epithet that came ever
more easily to the lips of the opponents of the peace process as the year wore on — and Secretary of State Christopher was accused of trying to wrest dangerous concessions from Israel. The demonstrators played a tape of Rabin's assertion, during the election campaign of 1992, that it would be dangerous for Israel to leave the Golan Heights.

Nevertheless, Christopher and his aides were upbeat about the peace process, particularly with Syria, following the secretary's meeting with President Assad. The secretary himself, speaking on February 24 to a delegation of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations in the United States, then on a visit to Israel, said that "[a]t the risk of having trip euphoria," he wanted to "sound a very positive note" based on "considerable progress." Indeed, the very next day, in Geneva, at a joint press conference with Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev (Moscow was cosponsor of the Madrid conference), he announced that invitations would be going out for a new round of bilateral negotiations, to be held in Washington during April.

The eighth round of talks had ended in December 1992 just as Israel deported some 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists to Lebanon (see "National Security," below). Since then, the Palestinians had been pressuring the Arab states to shun the peace process until the deportees were allowed back. On top of this, Christopher did not endear himself to the Palestinians when he told their representatives, in a meeting held in Jerusalem on February 24, that Washington would not renew its dialogue with the PLO (suspended since June 1990). The administration, a senior U.S. official explained, continued to view the PLO as "an organization with terrorist tendencies." At the same time, Christopher sought to coax the Palestinians back to the peace talks. Their spokeswoman, Hanan Ashrawi, said that President Clinton had sent Faisal al-Husseini, the senior Palestinian political figure in the territories, a "very positive and encouraging" message.

After some delay, with the Palestinians at first rejecting the U.S.-Russian invitation to resume the peace talks on April 20, on that date the Palestinians and the foreign ministers of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt announced that the Arab side was willing to resume the peace talks.

Whether by coincidence or not, on April 29 the World Jewish Congress made public a State Department letter, dated April 21, disclosing that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had "pledged to lift" the boycott on American firms that did business with Israel. On June 8, Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah of Kuwait confirmed that his country had in fact jettisoned the secondary, or indirect boycott, but not the ban on direct ties with Israel. Saudi Arabia had reportedly done the same, but with less publicity.
Bilateral Talks, Round Nine
(Washington, April 27–May 13)

The buzzword in the talks with the Palestinians, which got off to a promising start, was “early empowerment.” Israel expressed readiness to allow the Palestinians to take responsibility for certain spheres — police, budgeting, taxation, education, hospitals — even before the signing of a formal self-rule agreement. More immediately, Israel “compensated” the Palestinians for renewing the bilateral talks by agreeing to the inclusion of two members of the Palestinian diaspora as advisers to the working groups and allowing 30 veteran deportees from the territories to return home (see “National Security,” below). In another departure from previous policy, Israel agreed to the co-option of Jerusalem resident Faisal al-Husseini to the Palestinian delegation. (Until then, Israel had refused to negotiate with Palestinians from Jerusalem, concerned that this would be construed to mean that the Palestinians had sovereign rights in the city.)

The Palestinians, for their part, agreed for the first time since the talks began to take part in three working groups on issues related to the proposed self-governing authority: the meaning of self-rule, human rights, and shared resources, including the crucial water question. Almost immediately, however, the Palestinians walked out of the human-rights group, and afterward abandoned the others as well over new differences related to the the fate of the deportees in Lebanon.

In the course of the talks, each side drafted a declaration of principles on how to proceed in the negotiations. The United States then produced a compromise declaration. However, the Palestinians balked at signing the document, claiming that it was biased in Israel’s favor. The basic problem, according to Foreign Minister Peres, who addressed the Foreign Press Association of Israel on May 13 (and was deeply involved in the Oslo talks, where progress was being made), was that the Palestinians wanted to bring in the territorial dimension already in the interim stage.

In the talks with the Syrians, Israeli delegation head (and newly installed ambassador to Washington) Prof. Itamar Rabinovich presented a written document which, he said, went beyond the “five-word formula” of “full peace for full withdrawal,” though Israel spoke of “withdrawal on the Golan.” However, the Syrians’ chief negotiator, Mowaffak Allaf, said that the new Israeli position was “even worse” than its predecessor. Rabinovich said that Damascus had to make certain “political decisions” if the talks were to progress.

The talks with the Jordanian team were more substantive. “Compact groups,” in the description of Israeli spokesman Yossi Gal, were set up to discuss a variety of subjects. These included water, energy, and environment; security and borders; refugees; economic matters; and other bilateral questions, including health and tourism. The feeling was that the Jordanians were awaiting a breakthrough on the Syrian track before committing themselves.

In fact, at the end of the ninth round of talks, the sides had advanced hardly at all. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin (the initiator of the Oslo channel) pro-
fessed to see a partial silver lining in the fact that the United States had assumed a more substantial role. That, he said, was the "most important development" in the ninth round.

**Bilateral Talks, Round Ten**  
*(Washington, June 15–July 1)*

Prime Minister Rabin, in an address to his party's Knesset faction a week before the tenth round opened, savaged the Golan Heights settlers, who were campaigning vociferously against an agreement with the Syrians involving territorial elements. The following day, however, Rabin told the Knesset (via Health Minister Haim Ramon, the government's liaison with parliament) that he had a high regard for the Golan settlers for being "pioneers" who enhanced Israel's negotiating position vis-a-vis the Syrians. In a message directed to the Syrians, Rabin said that Israel would make its decision when it could "weigh the price of peace against the content of the peace."

On June 15, with the resumption of the bilateral talks, Secretary of State Christopher stated that the Clinton administration, like others before it, would "consider" giving security guarantees should Israel and Syria reach a "sound agreement" involving the Golan Heights. That seemed a distant possibility during the tenth round of the talks. The negotiators focused on security arrangements, having despaired, for the time being, of a meeting of minds on the substance of peace or the scope of withdrawal.

The Israel-Lebanon talks made no progress either, and in the Israeli view would never do so until headway was made with Syria. The feeling of Israeli chief negotiator Uri Lubrani was that "in some ways, we have regressed," while his counterpart, Souheil Chammas, said Israel wanted a "hegemonistic" peace.

On the Palestinian track, the opening of the tenth round was preceded by reports of secret contacts between Israeli and PLO representatives. A particularly interesting story, which appeared in the East Jerusalem Arabic-language daily *Al-Quds* on June 11, nine weeks before the conclusion of the Oslo talks, claimed that high-ranking Israeli and PLO officials had held talks in a number of European locales. In Washington, though, the sides were still unable to finalize a joint declaration of principles on Palestinian autonomy in the territories. An attempt by Faisal al-Husseini to place the volatile Jerusalem issue on the table as part of the interim agreement was categorically rejected by the chief Israeli negotiator to the Jordanian-Palestinian track, government secretary Elyakim Rubinstein, a holdover from the Likud period. Jerusalem, he said, must be reserved until the final-status round, some years down the road.

Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinians' spokeswoman, said on July 1, as the tenth round ended, that there had "only been deadlock, no gaps have been bridged" in the Israeli-Palestinian talks. Progress between Israel and the Palestinians was also
the key to a breakthrough with Jordan, according to the spokesman for that country’s delegation, Marwan Muasher. He noted, nevertheless, that the talks between Israel and Jordan had been "substantive."

Christopher’s Second Visit

On July 16, Secretary of State Christopher announced that he would pay his second visit to the Middle East in early August. State Department spokesman Mike McCurry took the opportunity to caution that if no progress were forthcoming by year’s end, the United States would have to reassess its position. McCurry added: "We can’t, as we say over and over again, do for the parties what they must do themselves, which is to address these issues, make hard choices, and go about the work of trying to build a framework for lasting peace in the region." A more concrete prospect of things to come was offered by Peres on July 29, in a joint interview with Faisal al-Husseini on Israel Television’s Arabic Service. Peres, now aware that the Oslo agreement was nearly in place, said that he favored an interim agreement in which the Palestinians would be given self-government in the Gaza Strip and in Jericho.

Christopher visited five countries between August 2, when he arrived in Cairo, and August 6, when he left the region. His report to Rabin on his meeting with Assad in Damascus prompted Rabin to tell the media that he had heard "good news" from Damascus and to inform the Labor party’s political bureau that Israel would have to make "hard decisions" concerning Syria. However, although Christopher flew out of the region after another stopover in Damascus, the mooted Israeli-Syrian "breakthrough" did not materialize.

Certainly there was nothing even resembling a breakthrough in the talks with the Palestinians, with whom Christopher met twice at the American consulate in East Jerusalem (he also met privately with Faisal al-Husseini in his suite at the King David Hotel). Both meetings were boycotted by the head of the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks, Haidar Abdel-Shafi. The Americans had expected to receive a document from the Palestinians at the first meeting, on August 3, responding to their "bridging" paper, which sought to overcome the differences on the joint Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles. However, although such a document did arrive in Jerusalem from PLO headquarters in Tunis, shortly before the August 3 meeting, the Palestinians at first refused to submit it because of a dispute with Tunis. The PLO document was eventually presented at the Palestinians’ second meeting with Christopher, on August 6, by order of Yasir Arafat.

As a result of the crisis in the Palestinian delegation over the document that was prepared for Christopher, three leading members of the Palestinian delegation — Faisal al-Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, and Saeb Arekat — went to Tunis to submit their resignations. Instead, it was announced on August 12 that they and four others on the Palestinians’ negotiating team had been appointed to the PLO’s executive committee. This meant that Israel was now officially talking to the PLO. On August
11, Prime Minister Rabin told Israel Television that if cabinet ministers wanted to meet with PLO representatives, he would not try to stop them. Asked whether he himself would meet with Yasir Arafat, he said: "I hope not."

Although Rabin and Peres said at the cabinet meeting on August 15 that the essence of the Palestinian negotiating team remained unchanged, and that Israel would talk only to residents of the territories who disavowed terrorism, others saw the handwriting on the wall. The settlers stepped up their campaign against the peace process. On August 12, a few thousand settlers and supporters marched to Labor party headquarters carrying banners warning that "Giving up the territories will mean Katyushas on Tel Aviv" and other apocalyptic pronouncements.

The settlers and their supporters had more success with a campaign that produced a huge rash of banners hung on the outside of apartment buildings, on bridges, and on other structures all over the country. The banners, many of them handmade at a religious girls’ school in Jerusalem, spelled out an identical message in outsize letters: "The nation with the Golan" (there was a play on the Hebrew words "nation" and "with"). Initially, city inspectors tried to remove the banners, which were both illegal and unsightly, but they could not cope with the sheer scale of the phenomenon.

The State Department took a more sanguine view of events. When it invited the sides to attend another round of bilateral talks at the end of August, its spokesman referred to "millimeter by millimeter" progress. On the 28th, the Arab parties to the peace process followed Israel in agreeing to resume the talks on August 31. However, by the time the 11th round of talks began, the Middle East had entered a new era.

The Norway Back Channel and the Oslo Agreement
(January 20—August 20)

Just as the new round of bilateral talks was getting under way, it suddenly emerged that, unbeknown to anyone but a handful of people, Israel and the Palestinians had signed a historic "Declaration of Principles" (DOP). In the preamble they agreed to "put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, . . . and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process." This astonishing document, which was signed in Oslo at a secret ceremony at 2:30 A.M. on August 20, marked the culmination of eight months of clandestine negotiations. Indeed, the fact that the talks had been kept secret was only slightly less remarkable than the agreement itself — as well as a precondition for its consummation. The talks had begun as something of an academic exercise. However, when it became apparent that a perhaps never-to-be-repeated opportunity had arisen, both sides, each pursuing its own vested interests, seized the opportunity and brought it to dramatic fruition. The world gaped.
It had all begun more than a year earlier, not long before the 1992 Knesset elections, when Terje Larsen, the director of a Norwegian research institute connected with his country's trade unions, was studying living conditions in the occupied territories, focusing on the Gaza Strip. Lunching one day in a Tel Aviv restaurant with Labor MK Yossi Beilin, Larsen said that on the basis of talks he had held in the territories and with the PLO leadership in Tunis, he believed that a Labor victory in the elections might create the opening for a breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Larsen was well-connected in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, where his wife, Mona Juul, herself a Middle East expert, ran the office of the minister, Johan Jørgen Holst. The upshot was that soon after Labor's victory, Norwegian deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland visited Israel, met with his newly appointed counterpart, Dr. Yossi Beilin, and the two agreed to create a secret Norwegian "back channel" to the official bilateral talks in Washington which, two years after Madrid, were at a standstill.

At that time, passage of the law permitting Israelis to meet with representatives of the PLO was still some months off. Clearly, Beilin himself could not become involved in talks with full-fledged PLO officials. However, he had a good friend, a Haifa University lecturer in political science, Dr. Yair Hirschfeld, who, with a colleague, Dr. Ron Pundak, a historian from the same institution, both dyed-in-the-wool "peaceniks," had been trying to nudge the process forward by informally exchanging ideas with leading Palestinians in the West Bank. In December 1992, a meeting was arranged with Abu Ala'a (Ahmed Suleiman Khoury), a banker who was the head of the PLO's economic section and who had been personally chosen for the mission by Yasir Arafat. Against a particularly inauspicious background — rampant Palestinian terrorism in Israel and the consequent deportation of 415 Islamic fundamentalists to Lebanon — they decided to press ahead.

In the third week of January the two Israelis met during three days with Abu Ala'a and two of his aides at a mansion near Oslo belonging to an industrialist friend of Terje Larsen's. It was the first of a series of intense secret colloquia held on Norwegian soil during the eight months that followed and that finally produced the DOP. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry provided its good offices, and a member of Larsen's research team coordinated the complex logistical arrangements that were necessary to insure absolute discretion as the negotiators came and went.

Early on, a draft document was drawn up by Hirschfeld and Abu Ala'a which insured that the participants focused on concrete practicalities and avoided a perhaps intellectually stimulating but ultimately barren gabfest. In fact, Beilin and Foreign Minister Peres had originally shrugged off the meetings as yet another purely academic exchange. However, ideas raised by Abu Ala'a, such as Israel's phased withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation, and major international investment in Gaza, were acceptable to Peres. With the bilateral talks producing only frustration, and Abu Ala'a seeming to have the sanction of Arafat himself, Peres and Beilin, aware of the virtues of secret diplomacy in the Middle East (notably in the run-up to the Israel-Egypt breakthrough), began
to look more seriously at the possibilities of the Oslo back channel. A second meeting took place in the second week of February.

Prime Minister Rabin was at first skeptical when he was informed of the existence of the Oslo channel, probably in March, but authorized the continuation of the talks. Like Peres, he too had reached the conclusion that the Washington talks were going nowhere, at least where the Palestinian track was concerned. It was by now obvious that the West Bank and Gaza negotiators — at Israel's own insistence members of the Palestinian "diaspora" and formal members of the PLO were excluded — could not deliver, not least because they cleared every move they made with the PLO leadership in Tunis.

Rabin had promised to get an agreement with the Palestinians within nine months of taking office as prime minister. As that period ended in the spring of 1993, Palestinian terrorism had just claimed a record 15 Israeli victims in a single month, and the Syrians — with whom Rabin had thought to conclude an agreement first — were still demanding a prior Israeli commitment to withdraw from the Golan Heights. At the same time, Israeli intelligence reports that the PLO was in dire financial and political straits and that Yasir Arafat was hanging on by a thread suggested that he might be amenable to making a deal. Besides, there was a consensus in Israel in favor of a pullout from the "hornets' nest," as the Gaza Strip was often called. If the Palestinians needed a symbolic achievement in the West Bank as well, Jericho, which had come up in the Oslo talks, was not out of the question. It seemed like a propitious moment to push for an agreement.

The decision was therefore made to upgrade and formalize the Oslo negotiations by appointing the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, to head the Israeli team. Savir participated for the first time in a meeting held in May; in June he and the two academics were joined by Yoel Singer, the former head of the international law branch in the Military Advocate General's office of the IDF. Singer, who had previously helped draft the peace treaty with Egypt, was then closing up his private law practice in Washington, D.C., having accepted Peres's invitation to become the Foreign Ministry's legal adviser. During the intervals between the Oslo sessions, Terje Larsen kept in constant contact by phone with Jerusalem and Tunis, using code names for the principal actors to befuddle any eavesdroppers.

Perhaps the best indicator that both sides were determined to reach an agreement was their ability to keep going despite the gloomy chain of events that marked 1993 in Israel and the territories: the repercussions of the deportation of Hamas activists to Lebanon at the beginning of the year, the closure of the territories at the end of March following the vicious wave of terrorist attacks that month, and Operation Accountability in July in the wake of mounting attacks by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and across the border (see "National Security," below).

Nevertheless, the talks came close to breaking down on more than one occasion. Some of the thorniest questions, such as Jerusalem, settlements, and refugees, were left for the "final status negotiations." Those talks would be held some way down
the road, by which time, it was hoped, irreversible facts would have been established on the ground. The Oslo talks came close to collapse, though, over a series of immediate, concrete questions that had to be resolved before the agreement could be implemented. These included the size of the Jericho area, control of the crossing points into the autonomous areas from Egypt and Jordan, the disposition of the settlements in the Gaza Strip, security on the roads, and the number of Palestinian policemen. These issues, which nonplussed the negotiators but had to be resolved before the IDF's withdrawal, would become the major causes for the crisis in the Israel-PLO talks later in the year. Another vexed question, that of mutual Israel-PLO recognition, was resolved in the period between the signing of the agreement in Oslo and the formal ceremony held in Washington some three weeks later (see below). In July, with the talks at a delicate and critical stage, Norwegian foreign minister Holst met with Arafat in Tunis. His message, basically, was that the present concatenation of circumstances might never recur and that the Palestinians should seize the moment.

Finally, a previously scheduled visit to Scandinavia by Peres, entirely unconnected with the Oslo talks, seemed to energize the negotiators. Peres arrived in Stockholm on August 17 and was joined there by Holst, Larsen, and Juul in a last-ditch effort to finalize an agreement by means of a series of calls throughout the night to Arafat in Tunis. By the time Peres arrived in Oslo, on August 19, for the second leg of his Scandinavian tour, the deal was virtually concluded. As Peres and Holst spoke at a state dinner held at the official Norwegian government guest house, where Peres was staying, the two negotiating teams were in a downtown Oslo hotel, wrapping up the agreement. In the Middle East it was business as usual: earlier in the day, nine Israeli soldiers had been killed in Lebanon; earlier in the month, four Israelis had been murdered in the territories.

By about 2:30 A.M. — it was now August 20 — all those involved, in addition to members of the Norwegian secret service, who had assisted with the logistics, had made their way to a room in the guest house for the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The signatories for Israel were Savir and Singer; for the Palestinians, Abu Ala'a and his aide, Hassan Asfour; and Holst signed as witness. The three signatories then delivered brief speeches. In this most unlikely of locations, at this most unlikely of hours, Israel and the Palestinians had signed a document which, if implemented, would begin to put an end to the War of 1948, known to Israeli Jews as the War of Independence and to the Palestinians as the Great Calamity.

The last weekend in August found Peres and Holst at Point Magu Naval Air Station in Oxnard, California, near Santa Barbara. There they met with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who was vacationing in the area, in order to brief him on what they had wrought. The Americans knew about the Oslo talks, Holst having apprised Christopher of their existence about three months earlier. However, they were unaware that an agreement had been concluded and signed. The two foreign ministers had a delicate selling job to do, not least because the United States was still officially boycotting the PLO, as Christopher had told the Palestinians on two
occasions when he met with them in Jerusalem. Peres, however, assured Christopher that before the agreement was formally signed, Israel and the PLO would have resolved the problem of mutual recognition, including the organization's renunciation of terrorism. He also told Christopher that he had received a positive reaction when he showed the document to the two top executives of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations a few days earlier.

By this time, rumors were flying about the Oslo agreement. Few people had in fact seen it, but the main points were known. In Israel, reactions covered the emotional gamut from elation to outrage, although the prevailing mood was more akin to stunned disbelief. The most puzzling aspect of the whole affair seemed to be the complete turnaround by Yitzhak Rabin. Opposition politicians dredged up quotation after quotation uttered by Rabin over the years deploring the PLO and ruling it out as a negotiating partner.

Although most Israelis seemed willing to take a wait-and-see attitude, the opposition parties and the settlers were enraged at what they perceived as the end of Zionism as they understood it. The operative word for many was "treason," and some did everything but call for insurrection. Brandishing red-hot rhetoric, they invoked the Munich Agreement (Likud leader MK Benjamin Netanyahu compared Peres unfavorably with Neville Chamberlain) and the Holocaust (Tsomet leader MK Rafael Eitan called Rabin and Peres "liars" and said they had signed an agreement "with the greatest murderer of Jews since Hitler"). MK Ariel Sharon urged the Likud to declare that it would scrap the agreement when it came back into power. The settlers' Rabbinical Forum spoke of the "betrayal of Eretz Yisrael" and prophesied civil war. An emergency meeting of 20 senior members of the opposition decided to raise one million shekels in order to fight the agreement.

On August 30, as the cabinet met to approve the agreement, 21 settlers were arrested in the course of a violent demonstration by several thousand people, mainly settlers, outside the Prime Minister's Office. Two policemen were hospitalized after they were struck by stones. Members of the Chabad movement were conspicuously present at the demonstration and, in increasing numbers, at antigovernment activity during the remainder of the year. Its slogan, splashed in large black-on-yellow banners and posters, was: "Israel is in danger." Yet Chabad's presence, although making for larger turnouts at demonstrations — thanks to the movement's vaunted organizational ability and internal discipline — when combined with the settlers' presence, invested the antipeace protests with an aura of religious fanaticism that turned off the Israeli (secular) mainstream, including many Likud voters who in any case were in favor of getting out of Gaza.

Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur, who acted as Rabin's lightning rod in the settlements, met with the leaders of the Katif Bloc in the Gaza Strip and assured them that for the next five years at least, "you can sleep quietly." During that transitional period, he explained, they would experience no changes. They would have their own exclusive roads, he said, and would not find themselves traveling unescorted through Arab areas. The settlers were not mollified.
The cabinet approved the DOP at its August 30 meeting, 16–0, with two abstentions, Interior Minister Arye Deri (Shas) and Economic Planning Minister Shimon Shetreet (Labor). Rabin and Peres recounted the events that had led up to the Oslo agreement, and Rabin spoke of Israel’s “tremendous opportunity.” His change of mind about the PLO, as he explained it, was purely pragmatic. He had originally taken what was essentially the Likud view: that a deal could be struck with the Palestinians in the territories, who in time would cut themselves loose from the PLO. However, after closely monitoring the bilateral talks since taking office, Rabin said, he had reached the conclusion that this was a fantasy. Anyone who was serious about making peace had to go straight to the PLO. In any event, the prime minister said, on three crucial issues the Israeli position had triumphed: Jerusalem, where Israel would remain sovereign; security, which would be Israel’s responsibility on the borders and in the territories; and the settlements, which would remain in place under Israeli control — in pointed contrast to the Likud’s uprooting of all the settlements in Sinai.

The agreement was strongly criticized on the security issue. Military commentators pointed out that the negotiators had not availed themselves of a military adviser. The army’s two top commanders, the chief of staff and his deputy, who had also reportedly been in the dark about Oslo, spoke of the problems that the security forces would face in combating terrorism under the new arrangements in the territories. A major concern was whether Israel would have the right of “hot pursuit” of suspected terrorists into the autonomy areas or whether the latter would effectively be able to find a haven in Gaza and Jericho.

Such worries were apparently not harbored by the 50,000 or more people who attended a peace rally in Tel Aviv on September 4, providing a major boost for Rabin and his government. The size of the crowd was a welcome surprise to the sponsors, Labor, Meretz, and Peace Now. The major slogans were: “There is a mandate for peace” (a counter to the ubiquitous “Rabin has no mandate to withdraw from the Golan Heights” stickers) and “Peace is my security.” The crowd was in a buoyant mood, and many stayed on to dance after the formal end of the demonstration.

Three days later, the opponents of the DOP showed that they, too, could get out the crowds. On September 7, at least 50,000 people tried to “lay siege” to the Prime Minister’s Office and the adjacent government buildings. Some 2,500 police and riot police tried to keep order (ten times as many as at the peace rally, where the police had little to do beyond directing traffic), arresting 20 demonstrators in the process. Many in the crowd were pupils from schools in the territories and from the state-religious track in Israel, with supervisors reporting a 40-percent absentee rate in some institutions. The “treason” motif was again pervasive in the posters and chants. At 2 A.M., after most of the demonstrators had gone home, the hard core of a few thousand who remained sat on the road and refused to budge. When police officers could not persuade them to move, they evacuated them forcibly, using water cannons and clubs and dragging them by the hair. Thirty-eight demonstrators and seven police were injured. The next day, some 2,000 demonstrators, mainly settlers,
milled around on a hill opposite the Prime Minister’s Office, occasionally blocking the road and clashing with police. Fifteen were arrested; three were injured and hospitalized.

**Mutual Recognition Achieved**

*(Paris, Tunis, Jerusalem, September 7–10)*

While these events were taking place, frantic efforts were under way to finalize an agreement on mutual recognition. (Arafat had in the meantime won approval for the DOP from the central committee of the Fatah organization.) While the DOP did not formally require it, it was crucial that Arafat agree to mutual recognition in order to placate Israeli public opinion and the U.S. administration, as well as to show that he was serious about making peace. Washington required a clear renunciation of terrorism in order to renew the dialogue with the PLO and permit its representatives to enter the United States for the signing ceremony, which had been set for September 13. Israel was also demanding that the PLO revoke the articles in the Palestinian Covenant that called for its destruction.

Even though the Palestinians had gone so far, their lifetime refusal to accept Israel’s existence made this last step the most difficult. Compounding matters, Arafat made statements, in private talks and in public, that contradicted elements of the DOP. Jerusalem was particularly irked by Arafat’s declaration that the Palestinians would have control of the Jordan River bridges. King Hussein of Jordan had expressed his support for the Israel-PLO agreement (on September 4) only after being assured by both Israel and the United States that the existing situation, in which Israel and Jordan controlled the bridges, and hence those entering Jordan from the territories, would continue. The Palestinians were also trying to introduce various changes into the Oslo version of the DOP before the signing in Washington. Certain minor alterations were in fact made. Mediation continued by Norway, with Egypt lending a hand.

Finally, on September 7, Uri Savir and Yoel Singer flew to Paris and checked into the luxury Bristol Hotel under assumed names. They were joined by the Palestinian interlocutors. Norwegian foreign minister Holst was already in Paris, and French officials were also involved in the final effort. Despite the fact that the entire world was focused on the last-ditch talks, journalists were unable to locate their venue. Working day and night, the negotiators, with open lines to Jerusalem and Tunis, hammered out the mutual recognition statements. Everything almost fell through at the last minute, owing to Arafat’s refusal to declare that the clauses in the Palestinian Covenant denying Israel’s right to exist were “invalid.” He was also unwilling to call on the residents of the territories to desist from violence and return to normal life — in other words to tacitly end the intifada and, by the same token, to recognize the Israeli occupation, even if only temporarily, in areas where autonomy was not introduced. It took a final round of phone calls between three conti-
ments in the predawn hours of September 9 to work out a compromise. Instead of being declared "invalid," the articles in question would be called "no longer valid," and Arafat would make the nonviolence call to the Palestinians via a separate letter addressed to the Norwegian foreign minister.

The signing ceremony in Israel was something of an anticlimax. It took place shortly after 9 A.M. on September 10 in a small room, crammed to bursting with reporters and photographers, in the Prime Minister's Office building. Foreign Minister Holst had arrived from Tunis earlier that morning, after securing Arafat's signature on the two documents. (It was not until after midnight that Arafat received the go-ahead from the PLO's executive committee to sign the declarations.) Rabin, flanked by Peres and Holst, nonchalantly took out an ordinary ballpoint pen from his jacket and signed his name to the Israeli document. Outside, thousands of demonstrators, who had regrouped for the occasion, shouted "Rabin is a traitor," burned the Palestinian flag, and chanted Psalms and Lamentations.

In his letter to Rabin, dated September 9, Arafat declared that the PLO "accepts the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security." The organization also accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Committing itself "to the Middle East peace process," the PLO also "renounce[d] the use of terrorism and other acts of violence" and pledged to "assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel" to insure that they would comply with this, and to "discipline violators" (the last point had been suggested by the Americans). Finally, "the PLO affirms that those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid." The PLO undertook to have the Palestine National Council formally effect the "necessary changes" in the covenant. In Arafat's letter to Holst, he "confirm[ed]" to the Norwegian diplomat that he would "include ... in [his] public statements" a call by the PLO to the "Palestinian people" in the territories "to take part in the steps leading to the normalization of life, rejecting violence and terrorism."

Rabin's letter, addressed "Mr. Chairman," consisted of one sentence: "In response to your letter of September 9, 1993, I wish to confirm to you that, in the light of the PLO commitments included in your letter, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process."

Rabin, Peres, and Holst then made brief remarks, focusing on hopes for a better future and thanking all those who had been involved in bringing about the agreement. It was all over in 20 minutes. The mass-circulation papers ran banner headlines in blue-and-white stating "Making Peace" (Ma'ariv) and "Rabin: For Our Children's Sake" (Yediot Aharonot). The latter, Israel's largest paper, also ran a front-page poll showing 57-percent approval for the agreement among the adult Jewish population (excluding the kibbutzim, which would have boosted the figure), up from 53 percent a week earlier, and 60-percent approval if the Israeli Arab population were also included.
Interviewed on Israel Television that evening, Prime Minister Rabin said he considered the Gaza/Jericho First agreement a kind of test case for the rest of the West Bank, which was far more “sensitive” than Gaza from the Israeli point of view. He stressed again that there would be no compromise over the status of “unified Jerusalem” as Israel’s capital and, continuing to dig at the Begin government’s action in Sinai, that no settlements would be uprooted. Rabin also said he was against the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the territories. To this Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu retorted in an interview the following evening that the government, by its agreement with the PLO, had effectively invested Arafat with head-of-state status and had set in motion a process that would inevitably lead to the creation of a hostile Palestinian state on Israel’s “narrow waist.”

On Sunday, September 12, after the High Court of Justice rejected three petitions asking it to bar the government from signing the agreement — by MKs Gonen Segev (Tsomet), Hanan Porat (National Religious), and the Organization of Victims of Terrorism — the cabinet unanimously approved the documents of Israel-PLO mutual recognition. (Absent from the discussion and vote was Interior Minister Arye Deri, who submitted a letter of resignation at the beginning of the meeting and then left; see “Domestic Affairs,” below.) Rabin noted, as he would continue to do for the rest of the year, that the success of the agreement depended on the existence of security for Israelis and on international economic aid for the territories.

The prime minister’s manifest lack of enthusiasm at the signing ceremony in his office, his constant harping on security, and his decision, disclosed to Israel Television on September 10 (Friday) that he would not be going to Washington for the signing ceremony, gave rise to new speculation that Rabin had somehow been “roped” into agreeing to the DOP by Peres. It was only after he received a personal invitation to attend the ceremony from President Clinton, via a phone call from Secretary of State Christopher at 6 A.M. on Saturday, that Rabin agreed to take part in the ceremony together with PLO chairman Arafat.

Formal Signing of the Declaration of Principles
(Washington, September 13)

What Peres called “the most impossible meeting in history” took place in Washington, D.C., on September 13, on the White House lawn, under sunny skies. In a carefully staged, almost festive ceremony, attended by 3,000 invited and/or well-connected guests, including former presidents Bush and Carter — an event that was a pastoral antithesis to the messy reality of the Middle East (“Israel-PLO Agreement Being Signed Today; Wave of Terror Attacks Here,” Ha’aretz headlined) — two adversaries who had been locked in bitter combat for nearly half a century met and, as the world rubbed its eyes in disbelief — with President Clinton nudging Rabin forward to reciprocate Arafat’s outstretched arm — shook hands. Moments before, Foreign Minister Peres and senior PLO official Abu Mazen (Mahmoud
Abbas), who had been deeply involved behind the scenes in bringing about the agreement, had signed the Declaration of Principles. Secretary of State Christopher and Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev signed as official witnesses.

Two last-minute crises threatened the ceremony. Arafat demanded that the word "Palestinian" at places in the DOP referring to the "Palestinian team" or the "Palestinian delegation" be changed to "PLO," to conform with the mutual recognition letters and, indeed, with the logic of Israel's own position. Rabin balked. The compromise was that the term "PLO" would appear in the preamble, and Abu Mazen would sign "For the PLO." Rabin also said he would refuse to appear on the platform if Arafat sported a pistol and a military uniform. The prime minister was assured by Martin Indyk, the head of the Middle East desk on the president's National Security Council, that Arafat would be unarmed and wear a "khaki suit."

In his remarks, in English, which undoubtedly struck a responsive chord in many Israelis, Rabin confessed that to sign the DOP "is not so easy — neither for myself, as a soldier in Israel's wars, nor for the people of Israel and not for the Jewish people in the Diaspora, who are watching us now with great hope, mixed with apprehension." In a speech heavy with the evocation of war and its human price ("we who have come from a land where parents bury their children"), he went on to declare that Israelis and Palestinians "are destined to live together, on the same soil and in the same land." Rabin also quoted from Ecclesiastes and, in Hebrew, from the daily prayer book.

Yasir Arafat, who spoke in Arabic, was effusive in his thanks to President Clinton and in his praise of "the great American people." (It was Arafat's first visit to the United States since his appearance before the UN General Assembly in 1974; he had been refused entry in 1988 by the State Department to address the UN because of his involvement in terrorism.) More down-to-earth than Rabin, Arafat referred to the concrete problems that still faced the two sides and, with a nod toward Syria, to the final goal of a "comprehensive peace" in the region. Israel, he implied, had an exaggerated perception of the Palestinians' power: "Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the rights of their neighbors or infringe on their security." Instead, the "strongest guarantee" of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians would be "putting an end to the latter's feelings of having been wronged and of having suffered a historic injustice."

The 70-minute ceremony, at which the other speakers were Clinton, Christopher, Kozyrev, Peres, and Abu Mazen, was given saturation coverage by Israeli radio and television. About 60 percent of all Israelis watched Israel TV's coverage of the signing in the late afternoon (Israeli time), and 62 percent saw a 4½-hour "View to Peace" program later in the evening. (Yasir Arafat gave a first-ever interview to Israel TV, and for the first time Israeli television reporters broadcast from Amman and Tunis.) While there was no dancing in the street (except for a small demonstration organized in a Jerusalem park by Peace Now), there was a general sense that a new era could be dawning.

In the settlements, though, unmitigated gloom prevailed. Some settlers prayed and chanted Psalms as they watched the ceremony. The settlers' council urged its
members to disregard the army's orders to use bypass roads because of the large numbers of Palestinians who were out celebrating the signing of the DOP. In a counterdemonstration, settlers organized two convoys of about 100 cars along main roads, Israeli flags flying from their vehicles. Hundreds of Orthodox Jewish women prayed at Rachel's Tomb, next to Bethlehem, for the annulment of the DOP. The Organization of Victims of Terrorism held a "mourner's meal," reclining on mattresses across from the Prime Minister's Office.

The Palestinians were in a buoyant mood. Pictures of Yasir Arafat and Palestinian flags — banned until a few days before on pain of arrest — went up all over the territories. Thousands gathered in the streets of Jericho and good-naturedly mobbed the head of the Civil Administration in the West Bank, Brig. Gen. Gadi Zohar. In the Gaza Strip, too, smiles replaced stones as the end of the Israeli occupation seemed to be just around the corner.

The Declaration of Principles

The DOP consists of a brief preamble (see above), 17 articles, four annexes, and "Agreed Minutes," which constitute a gloss on six of the articles and one of the annexes. The goal of the process, set out in Article I, is "to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the 'Council'), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338." The members of the Council will be chosen in "direct, free and general elections," to be held "under agreed supervision and international observation," although it is the "Palestinian police [who] will insure public order" during the elections. The "goal" is to hold the elections "not later than nine months" after the DOP has entered into force, which will occur "one month after its signing."

One of the most hotly debated issues during the Oslo talks was the jurisdiction of the elected Council, and more specifically the status of East Jerusalem — which the Palestinians sought to make the seat of their autonomy regime — and of its residents, whom they insisted be permitted to vote and stand for election to the Council. However, according to Article IV, the Council's jurisdiction "will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations." The meaning of this becomes clear in the "Agreed Minutes," which state, with specific reference to Article IV, that the Council's jurisdiction will not extend to "Jerusalem, settlements, military locations, and Israelis [i.e., settlers]."

At the same time, Annex I provides that "Palestinians of Jerusalem who live there will have the right to participate in the election process, according to an agreement" to be worked out later. Annex II states that the "offices responsible for carrying out the powers and responsibilities of the Palestinian authority . . . will be located in the Gaza Strip and in the Jericho area pending the inauguration of the Council" (that is, not in Jerusalem).

Article V stipulates that the "five-year transitional period will begin upon the
withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area” and the “permanent status” talks will get under way “not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period, between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian people representatives.” (As Foreign Minister Peres would later point out, the Oslo agreement was a crucial departure from the 1978 Camp David agreements in this respect: The DOP set a specific starting point for the transitional period — “upon the withdrawal” — and, ipso fact, for the beginning of the negotiations on the permanent settlement. In Camp David, by contrast, the beginning of the transitional period, and hence of all subsequent negotiations, was conditional on the prior establishment of the autonomy regime, a far more complex arrangement. Indeed, when the autonomy talks broke down in 1981, the entire process came to an end.)

Article VI provides for the Palestinians to assume responsibility for certain spheres of civil life immediately after the Israeli withdrawal and irrespective of whether the elections to the Council have been held. The areas covered are “education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism.” At the same time, “The Palestinian side will commence in building the Palestinian police force, as agreed upon.”

Before elections to the Council are held, the two sides are obligated to negotiate an “Interim Agreement” (Article VII) to determine the Council’s structure, size and, crucially, its authority. In Oslo, the Palestinians pushed to obtain the appurtenances of political sovereignty, including broad legislative powers, whereas Israel had in mind a regime more closely related to a municipal government. This was another issue not fully resolved in the DOP.

Although there was speculation that Arafat was not interested in holding elections to the Council in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas had a powerful hold, Article VII states that “the Civil Administration will be dissolved and the Israeli military government will be withdrawn” only after the Council’s inauguration. Moreover (Article XIII), “not later than the eve of elections for the Council,” Israel’s military forces would be “redeployed outside populated areas,” that is, the IDF would pull out of the cities in the West Bank. Additional redeployments would be “gradually implemented” as the Palestinian police force assumed increasing responsibility “for public order and internal security.”

As for the more immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces, from Gaza and Jericho, Annex II set a tight timetable. Critics said it was too tight, as too many issues still had to be resolved, such as the physical size of the “Jericho area.” The critics would soon be proven right. An agreement on the withdrawal from the autonomy areas was to be signed within two months after the DOP came into force, with Israel withdrawing its military forces from Gaza and Jericho within four months. Annex II listed among the items that were to be addressed by the withdrawal agreement the issue that would become the most vexed problem of all during the rest of 1993: “arrangements for coordination between both parties regarding passages” between Gaza and Egypt and between Jericho and Jordan.

Israel argued that it should bear sole responsibility for the crossing points. The
Palestinians' elected Council was to "establish a strong police force" (the language of Camp David), but "Israel will continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats, as well as the responsibility for overall security of Israelis [in the territories] for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order." The "Agreed Minutes" stipulated further that Israelis, both military and civilian, "may continue to use roads freely within the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area."

Finally, several joint bodies were to be established immediately: a "Liaison Committee" to "deal with issues requiring coordination, other issues of common interest, and disputes;" a "Continuing Committee for Economic Cooperation," covering a host of local topics such as water, energy, environment, finance, and trade and industry, as well as regional development (a Mideast "Marshall Plan"); and another "Continuing Committee," this one to include also Egypt and Jordan, which in addition to promoting cooperation "will decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, together with the necessary measures to prevent disruption and disorder."

**Knesset Approval**

Although nearly all the ideas in the DOP and much of the wording (such as the text on the "displaced persons") derived directly from the Camp David accords of 1978, which had been negotiated by the Likud government under Menachem Begin, the Likud rejected claims that the DOP was the reincarnation of Begin's Camp David accords. MK Binyamin Ze'ev Begin (Likud), the son of the late prime minister, said his father "would never have consented to an unholy alliance between the government of Israel and the terrorist Palestine Liberation-from-the-Jewish-presence Organization."

Although the government was not obliged to submit the DOP to the Knesset for approval, Rabin did so, following Menachem Begin's precedent with Camp David and the peace treaty with Egypt. The government announced that it would consider the result to be a vote of confidence, and Rabin threatened to call new elections if the coalition could muster no more than 61 MKs (56 from the coalition and the five from the two "Arab" parties who supported it from outside).

The Knesset debate began on September 21, with the news that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef had forbidden the six Shas MKs to vote against the DOP. Given three probable Likud abstentions, this meant that the government was assured of a majority. The only question was whether it would be a "Jewish" majority. MK Yosef Ba-Gad, from the transferist Moledet party, played on this fear when he petitioned the High Court of Justice — unsuccessfully — to prevent what he called the "Palestinian Members of Knesset" from taking part in the debate and the vote, claiming that they had a "conflict of interest."

On September 23, by a vote of 61–50 (eight abstentions), the Knesset formally approved the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles and the instruments of mutual
recognition. All the noncoalition parties voted against. The abstentions were by Likud MKs Shetreet, Milo, and Asaad as well as by five Shas MKs (one was abroad). Despite his earlier threats, Rabin declared that he was satisfied with the outcome, noting that the Knesset had given the government an absolute majority.

**Agenda with Jordan; Deadlock with Syria**

In the meantime, the momentum toward peace had continued in Washington on September 14, the day after the DOP was signed. In a ceremony held at the State Department, Israel and Jordan signed a "Common Agenda" setting out the precise issues that required "mutually satisfactory solutions" before the negotiations could "culminate in a peace treaty." The major items on the seven-point agenda were mutual security, the disposition of water resources, "refugees and displaced persons," the "definitive" demarcation of the border between the two countries, and "the potentials of future bilateral cooperation" in areas such as energy, the environment, transportation, and tourism.

Israel and Jordan had in fact been marking time for quite a while, having done all they could at the current level of talks, but at Jordan's insistence the signing of the Common Agenda had to await progress on one of the other tracks, preferably the Palestinian. The DOP was the catalyst.

A historic first public meeting of Israeli and Jordanian leaders took place on October 1, again at the White House. Crown Prince Hassan and Foreign Minister Peres were in Washington to attend an international conference of donor nations to raise money for the Palestinians in the territories. The two met in the Oval Office with President Clinton for about half an hour and then emerged to make brief remarks to the press with Clinton at their side. The president announced that Israel and Jordan had decided to establish a joint commission to promote bilateral economic development, and that another committee, this one with American participation, would seek solutions to wider regional problems and set in motion large-scale projects such as a canal between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea.

Two other important Israeli-Jordanian meetings were also reportedly held in the latter part of 1993, but in secret. According to the Israeli media, Prime Minister Rabin met with King Hussein on September 26 aboard the king's yacht off the coast of Aqaba in the Red Sea. The second secret meeting took place in Amman, between Hussein and Peres, at the beginning of November. The two signed a draft agreement on peace and economic cooperation. Peres himself indirectly confirmed the event when he referred immediately afterward to "dramatic developments" in an Israel TV interview and added cryptically, "Remember the third of November."

On November 30, at the State Department in Washington, in what was described as a very cordial atmosphere, representatives of Israel, Jordan, and the United States held talks on Israeli-Jordanian cooperation in economic affairs, tourism, and transportation. The Israeli participants in the two-day session included Elyakim Rubinstein and Uri Savir. A key issue on the agenda was Jordan's concern that its
currency, the dinar, continue to serve as legal tender in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank during the period of autonomy (the currency issue was also high on the agenda in the Israel-PLO talks; see below). Israel and Jordan signed a memorandum of understanding to enable additional Jordanian banks to operate in the West Bank. (One such bank had been operating there since 1986 and had eight branches.) A joint statement said that the sides had also discussed the development of the Jordan Rift Valley and had agreed that the establishment of trade relations between the two countries was crucial for the region’s economy.

The remaining major track of the bilateral talks, Israel-Syria, was effectively at a standstill, despite a spate of new rumors, immediately after the Oslo agreement became public, that the two countries were secretly on the verge of an agreement. Secretary of State Christopher, in an obvious effort to placate Damascus after the bombshell of the DOP — which President Assad, the great advocate of a comprehensive settlement, could do much to torpedo — said on Face the Nation (September 12) that American troops could be deployed on the Golan Heights as part of an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty. However, it was clear that Prime Minister Rabin did not believe it was possible, owing to Israeli domestic considerations, to conclude two such momentous agreements simultaneously. Rabin’s see-saw ascription of priority, now to the Palestinian and now to the Syrian track, had been resolved for him by the Oslo negotiators.

In mid-October, the United States decided not to issue invitations for the 12th round of bilateral talks, which had been scheduled to open in Washington at the end of the month, after Damascus declared that it would not attend. Assad also rejected new overtures by Israel, made through the Americans, to hold secret talks of the kind that had produced the breakthrough with the PLO.

Another round of shuttle diplomacy by Secretary of State Christopher at year’s end gave hope for progress in 1994. Christopher arrived in Israel on December 3 and in the week that followed visited Damascus twice (as well as Amman, Cairo, and, on his way home, Tunisia and Morocco). Both the United States and Israel had recently adopted a more conciliatory tone toward Damascus to reassure the Syrian leadership that, despite recent developments on the other tracks, Syria was still a key player in the peace process. In his first meeting with President Assad, on December 6, Christopher announced several goodwill gestures by the administration, including approval for Kuwait to sell Damascus three used American-built civilian aircraft. Assad responded by agreeing to meet with and assist a U.S. congressional delegation that planned to investigate the issue of the Israeli soldiers missing in action. Rabin welcomed the move as “an important step forward, parallel to our contacts with the PLO on this subject” (see below). Assad also reportedly agreed to let another 800 Syrian Jews leave the country.

On December 9, following his second meeting with Assad, Christopher announced that the bilateral talks between Syria and Israel would resume in Washington in late January or early February 1994. Christopher added that Assad and President Clinton would meet in Geneva in mid-January, a major concession by the
Implementing the Declaration of Principles

Foreign Minister Peres had hoped that a declaration ending the Arab boycott of Israel would be made at the conference of donor nations held on October 1 at the State Department in Washington, but this did not happen. Still, even without a boycott breakthrough, the conference, whose goal was to raise funds for the Palestinians in the territories, was a success. Representatives from 43 countries attended, including (besides the United States and Israel) Russia, the EC, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and an impressive turnout from the Arab world: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Oman, Bahrein, the Emirates, Kuwait, and, crucially, Saudi Arabia, which was still bitterly resentful of Yasir Arafat's support for Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War. Israel was represented by Finance Minister Avraham Shohat and senior officials, in addition to Peres. A steering committee consisting of the United States, Russia, the EC, Japan, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Norway was set up. (It held meetings in Paris, at World Bank headquarters, in early November and mid-December, with Israel and the PLO attending as observers.)

The Saudis, evidently putting the past behind them and showing the way for the oil-rich Gulf states, came through with a $100-million pledge. All told, the participating countries promised to pour more than $2 billion — as grants, loans, and loan guarantees — into the territories over a five-year period as an incentive for the success of the Israel-PLO agreement and to demonstrate the fruits of peace.

As it turned out, however, these pledges (themselves still only on paper) were virtually the only concrete achievement toward implementing the DOP during the remainder of 1993. According to the timetable, the DOP would enter into force on October 13 (one month after the signing). Two months later, that is, by December 13, the sides had to conclude the interim agreement on the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, including "comprehensive arrangements" that would apply in those areas afterward.

On October 6, Prime Minister Rabin, at his request, met with Arafat in Cairo, under the auspices of President Mubarak, to set up the framework for the talks on implementing the DOP. With only a week to go before the DOP formally came into effect and the countdown began, Jerusalem was worried that Arafat, in between his visits to world capitals to celebrate the signing, was avoiding the less attractive but more essential business of appointing negotiators. At the same time, mounting Palestinian terrorism and IDF crackdowns in the territories were cutting into support for the DOP. A summit meeting was essential to set the talks in motion quickly and maintain the momentum of the process.

Following the meeting, which both sides described as positive, Rabin and Arafat held separate press conferences to announce that they had agreed to set up four committees. Two of them, the liaison committee and the committee on working out...
the terms of the Israeli withdrawal, would meet on October 13, in Cairo and in Taba, respectively. The composition of the third committee, on economic cooperation, would be decided on at the Cairo meeting, while the fourth team, which would deal with the arrangements for the elections to the Council, would convene in Washington as part of the next round of bilateral talks, at that time still scheduled for the end of November (the latter committee did not meet in 1993, not only because the bilateral talks were postponed — see above — but also because Israel refused to discuss the second stage of the DOP until the first was implemented). On October 13, concurrent with the entry into force of the DOP, the liaison committee, headed by Shimon Peres and Abu Mazen, met in Cairo. Israel agreed to permit an advance survey team of the PLO to enter the Gaza Strip in order to study the economic and social conditions there. The Palestinians put on the table the issue of “confidence-building measures,” including the release of all Palestinian prisoners incarcerated in Israeli jails, whose number they put at 13,000. To Israel they were “security” prisoners, but the Palestinians considered them “political” prisoners and said there was no valid reason to hold them after the signing of the DOP and the mutual recognition instruments — and the return of the deportees.

October 13 also saw the beginning of the talks on the Israeli withdrawal, held at the Hilton in Taba (the Egyptian resort area just south of Eilat). Committees were set up to deal with security (including the powers of the Palestinian police, border crossings and the protection of Israeli civilians on the roads) and civilian affairs (transfer of authority from the Civil Administration to the Palestinians). A subcommittee was established to deal with “confidence-building measures,” meaning basically the release of Palestinian prisoners. As for the size of the Jericho area, there seemed no obvious way to reconcile the Palestinians’ conception of 345 square kilometers, which was the size of the Jericho District under Jordanian rule, and the Israeli notion of 25 square kilometers, covering the city alone. Still, both sides emphasized the positive and constructive atmosphere that had prevailed.

On October 21, the second and final day of the second round of Taba talks, agreement was reached on the release of a first group of Palestinian prisoners, with more to be freed “gradually and continually,” according to a joint statement. On October 25, as the third round of Taba talks got under way, Israel released 660 Palestinian prisoners, 380 from the West Bank and 280 from the Gaza Strip. The talks, which lasted three days, concluded on an optimistic note, Israel having promised to produce a detailed timetable of its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip at the opening of the next round. (This was not possible for Jericho, as its size was still in dispute.) In addition, a committee had reached agreement in principle on the structure of the Palestinian police force, although there was still a wide discrepancy regarding its size (the Palestinians spoke of 25,000, Israel of about a quarter of that number) and its coordination with the Israeli security forces. A second committee was dealing with the withdrawal arrangements from Gaza, the border crossings, and the settlers. On November 1, the fourth round of talks convened at Taba for Israel’s presentation of its plan of withdrawal from Gaza, a moment long awaited by the
Palestinians. Following a 50-minute lecture explaining the withdrawal plan, the Palestinians complained that the withdrawal, as presented by Israel, was not from the Gaza Strip but within it, leaving military bases, enclaves around the settlements, and other appurtenances of the occupation. Gen. Amnon Shahak, deputy chief of staff, promised that “90 percent of the Palestinians [in the Gaza Strip] will wake up one morning, after the agreement is implemented, and will see not a single Israeli soldier.” Nevertheless, on November 2, the Palestinians announced that they were unilaterally suspending the talks in protest at the Israeli withdrawal plan, which Nabil Shaath described to reporters as a “redeployment” rather than a pullout.

A previously announced visit to Israel on November 4 by Egyptian foreign minister Amre Moussa helped resolve the crisis and demonstrated Egypt’s importance as a mediator. At a November 8 meeting in Cairo, negotiators reached agreement on extensive cooperation between the IDF and the Palestinian police. Full-scale negotiations were to resume the following week. With agreement in principle reached on a number of key issues, there was some optimism that the December 13 deadline could be met. Nevertheless, the questions that had to be resolved before an Israeli withdrawal could begin still seemed insurmountable. These were: control of the border passages, the size of the Jericho area, and Israeli deployment to protect the Gaza Strip settlements.

In the meantime, in the El-Arish talks on the transfer of civil powers (November 24–25) agreement had been reached on issues including land registry, the judiciary, religious affairs, and the issuing of identity cards (though not passports). In the week that followed, talks began on the transfer of powers in more substantial spheres: education, health, and social welfare.

In the Cairo security talks, however, there was total deadlock. Prime Minister Rabin, addressing a Labor party forum on the 25th, declared that although Israel was doing its best to meet the December 13 deadline, “there are no sacrosanct dates, and what will dictate Israel’s moves is above all the security consideration.” Rabin would intone this refrain with increasing frequency in the period immediately ahead. In a variation, he said that it was preferable to conclude an agreement without loopholes or unclarities, even if it were signed two or three weeks after December 13.

The final visit to the region in 1993 by Secretary of State Christopher, in the first week of December, was geared primarily to the Syrian track. The secretary was reluctant to intervene in the Israel-PLO talks, not only because the United States had not been involved in securing the agreement or in the negotiations since, but also because Christopher thought its wording too vague, and also because Israel — as opposed to the PLO — did not care for American intervention. The bilateral talks continued in Cairo and El-Arish, but had little prospect of progress in the final week before December 13, particularly when it became apparent that Rabin and Arafat were going to meet on or just before that date in a last-ditch effort to meet the original timetable.

In the meantime, the opposition was seizing on the unrelenting terrorism in the
territories — "dancing on the blood," Rabin fumed — to turn public opinion against the agreement with the PLO. The demonization of Arafat continued. Hysteria was whipped up about the consequences of "arming thousands of terrorists under the guise of the Palestinian police." Moreover, as the talks dragged on without resolution, Hamas made ever deeper psychological and concrete inroads in the territories. In pointed contrast to General Shahak's comment that 90 percent of Gazans would wake up one day and find the Israeli army gone, there were now more troops in the territories than at any time since the early days of the intifada five years earlier.

On December 8, the Israeli and Palestinian delegations, meeting in Cairo, exchanged drafts of the interim agreement. The Israeli document, more than 100 pages long, was presented by Foreign Ministry legal adviser Yoel Singer, while Dr. Shaath outlined the Palestinians' conception of the final agreement. The two sides decided to hold "marathon" negotiations in order to forge a single, agreed-upon paper out of the two drafts as a foundation for making final decisions.

On December 9, Arafat and Peres met for a private discussion at Granada, Spain, where they were attending a conference of intellectuals for Middle East peace. It was their first meeting since the White House ceremony on September 13, and a far less festive occasion.

On the issue that had become the most crucial of all, because of its symbolic value for the Palestinians and its security implications for Israel — the control of the crossing points into Gaza and Jericho — Peres asserted that Israel would agree, at most, to discuss the possibility of a Palestinian presence at the bridges. However, overall responsibility had to remain solely in Israeli hands. Peres added that Arafat's indecisiveness on the economic talks in Paris (see below) was causing immense damage to Arafat's credibility in the eyes of the donor nations. Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said on December 11, after meeting with Arafat twice in Tunis, that the PLO leader was in a state of "terrible distress" because he did not know how he would be able to cope with the economic problems facing the autonomy regime, including how to pay salaries. None of this was conducive to winning public support for the agreement.

With polls showing support for the DOP falling among both Israelis and Palestinians, Rabin and Arafat met in Cairo on December 12. However, they did little more than review the stands that had led to the stalemate in the first place. Most of the discussion focused on the border crossings and the size of the Jericho area, both sides reiterating their positions. Rabin and Arafat agreed that the two sides would hold secret talks and that the two leaders would meet again in ten days' time.

December 13, then, which should have marked the start of the Israeli withdrawal, passed like any other day in the territories. Rabin told the cabinet — which met in special session to be briefed on his meeting with Arafat — that Israel would not compromise on security and that there were no "sacrosanct dates," although the withdrawal itself could still be completed very close to April 13, 1994. One new development was the arrival, via Allenby Bridge, after training in Jordan, of 41
Palestinian policemen. They were welcomed at a ceremony in front of Orient House in East Jerusalem and went on to Jericho.

**Liaison Committee Reactivated**

On December 18, the Israeli-Palestinian liaison committee, headed by Shimon Peres, which had met only once since the DOP was signed, convened for secret talks in Oslo. The liaison committee met again in Versailles, December 21–23, with Peres updating Rabin every few hours and Labor party secretary-general Nissim Zvili helping to coordinate from Tunis, where he met several times with Arafat.

At Versailles, where the tone was occasionally acrimonious, the main topic was the arrangements for the border crossing points, in an attempt to find a golden mean that would satisfy Palestinian “dignity” and Israeli security. A major point of dispute was whether all the Palestinians entering the self-governing areas would undergo Israeli security checks, or only suspects. The PLO insisted that under any arrangement, Israeli security agents at the crossing points should “see but not be seen.” On the Jericho question, Israel proposed an area of 55 square kilometers (twice the size of its original proposal).

The liaison committee began intensive negotiations in Cairo on the evening of December 27. Within less than 48 hours, the negotiators had reached agreement on a draft document covering all the crucial issues, which was to be referred to Rabin and Arafat for ratification. Arafat, however, refused to accept the concept, agreed to in Cairo, that incoming Gaza and Jericho residents would go through a double check, Palestinian and Israeli. He also demanded an international presence at the border crossings as well as a Palestinian flag and a Palestinian policeman. As for Jericho, the import of Arafat’s claims would be to make the area contiguous with the international border between Jordan and Israel. All these ideas were unacceptable to Israel and represented old positions which, as one Israeli source said, “take us back almost to square one.”

**Economic Cooperation Committee Meets**

On November 16, after various delays, a first, one-day, meeting of the Israeli-Palestinian economic coordination committee was held in Paris. The Israeli delegation head, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, termed it a “historic day” and said the first meeting had been very productive. The agenda included the trade and customs arrangements between Israel and the autonomy areas, the continued employment of workers from the territories in Israel, and the fiscal and monetary policy of the self-governing authority. A joint communiqué issued at the end of the first round of talks emphasized the need for a rapid improvement in the economic situation of the Palestinians.

The Paris talks continued intensively, though quietly, in the weeks that followed. Contentious issues included the possible creation of a customs union between Israel
and the Palestinian entity; the Palestinians' intention to introduce a currency of their own, to which Israel objected; and the impact of the unrestricted entry of Palestinian agricultural produce into Israel (no produce had been allowed in during the occupation in order to protect Israeli agriculture).

Two more rounds of talks took place before the end of the year in Paris, but no final agreement was reached.

**OTHER DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS**

*Agreement with the Vatican*

Amid rumors that the Vatican, in the wake of the Israel-PLO agreement, would finally agree to establish diplomatic relations with the Jewish state, Ashkenazi chief rabbi Yisrael Lau had an audience with Pope John Paul II on September 21. According to Lau, the meeting, which was held at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer palace in the mountains south of Rome, centered on spiritual and historical themes. The atmosphere, he said, was warm, as the two Krakow-born religious leaders recalled childhood memories. The pope spoke of a future visit to Israel — when “providence” willed it — and suggested what Lau called a “channel” through which Israel could pursue its search for MIAs in Lebanon.

On December 30, Israel and the Vatican signed a historic “Fundamental Agreement” in Jerusalem. Both sides hoped that the event would constitute the beginning of a new chapter in the troubled two-millennia relationship between the Jewish people and the Roman Catholic Church. The signatories were Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Yossi Beilin and Msgr. Claudio Maria Celli, Vatican under secretary for relations between states. The bilateral committee that drafted the agreement, cochaired by Beilin and Celli, had approved the document the day before in a meeting held at the Vatican. Negotiations had been under way since July 1992, when the two sides had agreed on an agenda for talks. The agreement declared that “full diplomatic relations, at the level of Apostolic Nunciature, on the part of the Holy See, and Embassy, on the part of the State of Israel,” would be established immediately after the formal ratification of the Fundamental Agreement, early in 1994.

In the agreement the two sides affirmed their “commitment to the promotion of the peaceful resolution of conflicts among States and nations.” However the Holy See, although “maintaining in every case the right to exercise its moral and spiritual teaching-office,” implicitly pledged not to intervene in the Middle East peace process by pointing out that “owing to its own character, it is solemnly committed to remaining a stranger to all merely temporal conflicts, which principle applies specifically to disputed territories and unsettled borders.”

Much of the agreement was devoted to clarifying the status of the many Catholic institutions in the Holy Land. Israel promised “to maintain and respect the 'status
quo' in the Christian holy places to which it applies and the respective rights of the Christian communities thereunder." (This clause drew fire from Orthodox Christian sects, which objected to a perceived attempt by the Catholics to speak in their name.) On more spiritual matters, Israel reiterated "its continuing commitment to uphold and observe the human right to freedom of religion and conscience, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and elsewhere. The Holy See, in parallel, invoking the Declaration on Religious Freedom of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, affirmed "the Catholic Church's respect for other religions and their followers." More specifically, and tellingly, in Article 2.2, "The Holy See takes this occasion to reiterate its condemnation of hatred, persecution and all other manifestations of antisemitism directed against the Jewish people and individual Jews anywhere, at any time and by anyone. In particular, the Holy See deplores attacks on Jews and desecration of Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, acts which offend the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, especially when they occur in the same places which witnessed it."

At a press conference that took place after the signing, in a room at the Foreign Ministry that was bursting with media representatives from around the world (CNN International broadcast the event live), the question of Jerusalem — not mentioned by name in the agreement — was raised. According to Msgr. Celli, the Vatican sought an "international umbrella" that would guarantee the status of Jerusalem. He called for an "international protocol to protect the peculiarity of Jerusalem." However, he said, the Vatican would set up its embassy in Tel Aviv. Msgr. Celli noted that Pope John Paul II, "who has great affection for this land, made holy by divine revelation," would very much like to visit the Holy Land, but that such an event was not imminent.

On the same day that the Israel-Vatican agreement was signed, something of the new spirit was already visible: the Latin Patriarch attended the President of Israel's New Year's reception for the first time since 1967. Patriarch Michel Sabbah (the first Palestinian Arab to serve in the post) noted, in reference to the Israel-PLO accord, that the "peoples of the area have initiated a process of reconciliation," hence his decision to attend. The Armenian and Greek-Orthodox patriarchs had never boycotted the occasion, which was held at the President's residence, but the Catholics had previously been represented by the Bishop of Galilee.

**Relations with the United States**

(See "The United States, Israel, and the Middle East," and "Jewish Communal Affairs," elsewhere in this volume.)
Other Foreign Relations

EGYPT

The new Labor government made strenuous efforts to warm up relations with Egypt, which had cooled sharply under the Likud. The renewed strain in the relations caused by the deportation to Lebanon of more than 400 Islamic activists seemed not to affect the personal bond that Prime Minister Rabin had established with President Hosni Mubarak when he visited Cairo immediately after forming his government in July 1992. (Nevertheless, Mubarak continued to avoid making a visit to Israel.) Between March and July, Mubarak's confidant and foreign policy adviser, Osama el-Baz, went to Israel twice to meet with Israeli officials; Rabin and Peres each paid a visit to Mubarak in Egypt to explore ways of moving the peace process forward.

Following the signing of the Israel-PLO agreement in September, Egypt sought to reassert itself as a major player in the Middle East diplomatic game. While the Likud government had rebuffed efforts by Cairo to take a more significant mediating role — and, by implication, to strengthen Israel-Egypt relations — the Labor government took a very different view. Prime Minister Rabin met with President Mubarak in Alexandria on September 19, six days after the signing of the Israel-PLO agreement, to brief the Egyptian leader on developments relating to the accord. On October 6 (as it happened, the 20th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War), President Mubarak hosted the first working meeting of its kind between Prime Minister Rabin and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat.

Rabin's final meeting with Mubarak in 1993, a 50-minute private session, took place on December 12, in Cairo, immediately before the prime minister met with PLO chairman Arafat in a final effort to resolve the difficulties that were holding up agreement on an Israeli withdrawal (see above).

MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

On May 24, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid arrived in Morocco to attend a three-day meeting on Middle East environmental questions organized by the World Bank. In doing so, he became the first Israeli minister ever to attend an international conference in an Arab country.

An immediate effect of the Israel-PLO agreement was to help legitimize Israel's presence in the Middle East in the eyes of moderate Arab states. On September 14, on their way back home from the Washington signing ceremony, Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres made a surprise stopover in Morocco. In contrast to their previous visits to Morocco, made under clandestine or semiclandestine conditions, the Israeli leaders received a formal state welcome. Expectations ran high that the two countries would announce the establishment of diplomatic rela-
tions. However, following a one-hour meeting with King Hassan II, Rabin told reporters that the purpose of the visit was to acknowledge the king's contribution to the peace process.

At the beginning of November, in another historic first, a 14-member delegation from the Moroccan business and industrial community visited Israel. The group was headed by an economic adviser to King Hassan II. Later in the month, Israel's two largest banks, Hapoalim and Leumi, established correspondence relationships with two of Morocco's major banks.

When an official Israeli delegation attended the meeting of the committee on refugees within the framework of the multilateral talks, in Tunisia in early October, the Israeli delegation was officially welcomed by Foreign Minister Habib Ben-Yehhia. However, he was cool to Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin's request for Tunisia to speed up the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. In late December, Labor party secretary Nissim Zvilli paid a five-day visit to Tunisia, meeting with Yasir Arafat (see above) but also with senior Tunisian government officials including Foreign Minister Ben-Yehhia. In a press conference on his return to Israel, Zvilli said that the Tunisians would like to normalize relations with Israel, "but at their own pace."

GULF STATES

In November Qatar became the first country in the Persian Gulf to announce that it would initiate a direct telephone link with the occupied territories. The statement was published by the official Qatar News Agency. The same month, the Kuwaiti daily Al-Siyassah published an interview with President Ezer Weizman, in which, among other points, Weizman invited Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to visit Israel. In December Oman informed the steering committee of the multilateral talks, then meeting in Tokyo, that it would host the next round of talks on water resources, scheduled for April 1994.

LIBYA

For a brief moment in 1993, a breakthrough in relations seemed possible with one of Israel's most implacable foes, Libya. On May 31, about 200 Libyan pilgrims crossed into Israel from Egypt. Their stay in Israel was arranged, and paid for, by newspaper publisher Ya'akov Nimrodi. Upon their arrival, amid considerable media hype, not least in the mass-circulation, Nimrodi-owned Ma'ariv, the pilgrims were greeted by Tourism Minister Uzi Baram. However, the next day, after the group's leader urged the Islamic world to "liberate" Jerusalem, the Tourism Ministry disowned the visitors, and various political figures urged their expulsion. After the Libyans were also condemned by the Palestinians, for implicitly recognizing Israel, and Deputy Foreign Minister Beilin branded Libya a "pariah" state, the members of what Nimrodi touted as the first organized pilgrimage from a Muslim state to Israel cut short their visit by a day and left on June 2.
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Much of the years-long ill will between Israel and the EC, related to Israel's policies in the occupied territories, seemed to evaporate after the signing of the Israel-PLO agreement in September. Days after the agreement became public knowledge, Foreign Minister Peres met in Brussels (September 2) with European Commission president Jacques Delors (and with the foreign ministers of Belgium and the Netherlands). Delors declared that, to show its full support for the historic Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles, the EC would substantially increase its financial aid to the territories and reaffirm its political, moral, and financial support for Israel.

The new attitude was seen almost immediately in connection with a dispute that was souring Israel-EC relations, the EC's slow pace in renewing their 1975 Free Trade Agreement. In July Prime Minister Rabin had lashed out at the EC, claiming that its foot-dragging was politically motivated and was "unjustified discrimination against Israel [that] can no longer be tolerated." However, it was only after the agreement with the PLO that Rabin and Peres, in consecutive swings through Western Europe (see also below), got results.

On December 1, in an address to the European Parliament in Brussels, Rabin invoked the Israel-PLO agreement in urging the newly renamed European Union (EU) to improve its trade relations with Israel as an expression of Europe's support for the peace process. At bottom, his message was: "Help the Palestinians with economic aid and give Israel a chance to grow economically by lifting export restrictions to Europe." On December 21, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the EU approved the mandate that had been granted to the EU Commission to begin formal negotiations with Israel on a new, comprehensive agreement to replace the 1975 accord. Detailed talks were to begin in February 1994.

WESTERN EUROPE

In the first event of its kind in 17 years, Swedish foreign minister Margaretha af Ugglas visited Israel in January. In the course of President Chaim Herzog's last official trip abroad before his mandatory retirement after serving two terms, he became the first Israeli president to pay a state visit to England. He then went on to pay a four-day state visit to the Netherlands, which he had helped liberate as a British soldier in World War II.

The growing strength of the extreme right in Germany was one of the main issues on the agenda when Foreign Minister Peres visited Germany in March. In early December, Prime Minister Rabin visited Bonn, where he told Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Israel's concern at the sale of German military technology to Iran. In the same connection, he discussed the efforts, in which Germany was deeply involved, to discover the whereabouts of flight navigator Ron Arad, who was captured in Lebanon in 1986 and was thought to be in Iranian captivity.

Chancellor Franz Vranitzky paid a four-day visit to Israel in June, the first-ever
visit by an Austrian head of state. Prime Minister Rabin said he hoped the visit would promote friendship between the two countries, which had known "ups and downs" in their relations. (Israeli-Austrian relations had been virtually severed during Kurt Waldheim's term as chancellor in the 1980s.) In a speech delivered upon being awarded an honorary doctorate by the Hebrew University, Vranitzky stated that Austria accepted "moral responsibility" for having supported the Nazi regime. He said that the present-day Austrian government considered it a "priority" to insure that Austria was not tainted by the xenophobia that had manifested itself recently in various parts of Europe.

On July 24, Deputy Foreign Minister Beilin and Greek Foreign Affairs under secretary Virginia Tsouderou signed a protocol, in Athens, stipulating that a joint committee would meet twice yearly to discuss cooperation in various areas, such as tourism, agriculture, and health. The agreement was one of a series of accords signed between Israel and Greece during the year. Beilin said that, in contrast to the recent past, Greece was now a "close friend."

The four-day state visit in November by King Juan Carlos of Spain, accompanied by Queen Sofia, was the first ever by a reigning European monarch to Israel. Five bilateral cooperation agreements were signed during the visit, the emphasis on improving trade ties between the two countries and between Israel and the EC.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres paid an unplanned visit to France at the beginning of September. While he was in Brussels to discuss the Israel-PLO agreement with EC officials (see above), he received an invitation from French president François Mitterrand to visit him in the south of France where he was vacationing, to brief him on the agreement. In France in early December, Prime Minister Rabin met with President Mitterrand and other senior government officials against the background of improved relations between the two countries since the advent of the Labor government in Israel. France had even lifted the arms embargo on Israel that had been in effect since President Charles de Gaulle imposed it in 1967.

In Italy, during the same European tour, Rabin asked his interlocutors to expedite a $5-million feasibility study which Rome had pledged to undertake on the old idea of building a canal between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. The Italians were also requested to do their part in implementing an agreement concluded between Rabin and Egyptian president Mubarak, according to which Israel would receive oil from Italian-owned refineries in Egypt.

Israel's close relations with Denmark were reaffirmed when recently elected (January 1993) Danish prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen chose Israel as the second country to which he paid a state visit. It was a relationship based in no small measure on Denmark's rescue of its Jewish population during World War II. During his four-day stay in December, Rasmussen, accompanied by Mayor Ehud Olmert, visited Denmark Square in Jerusalem, with its sculpture of a boat evoking the dramatic events of half a century earlier. Denmark was taking an active role in Middle East developments, with Danish experts involved in the multilateral talks on combating desertification; Copenhagen also hosted the multilateral talks on
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regional economic cooperation in November. Rasmussen promised the Israelis Denmark’s support on the terms of the new trade agreement with the EC.

OTHER EUROPEAN STATES

Israel continued to cement its new relations with the republics of the former Soviet Union.

In January a delegation of Russian MPs, led by Parliament Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, visited Israel to discuss the peace process and ways to improve commercial ties. It was the first visit by the Speaker since diplomatic relations with Russia were reestablished in 1991. Russia and Israel signed a civil aviation agreement in September, on the occasion of a visit by Transport Minister Yisrael Kessar to Moscow. The agreement provided for each country’s national carrier to fly to two destinations in the other country and to use the other as a stopover en route to a third country.

In January Leonid Kravchuk became the first Ukrainian head of state (and the first from a former Soviet republic) to visit Israel, where he dedicated the Ukrainian embassy. Kravchuk, who visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, said that it was historically wrong to blame the entire Ukrainian people for the massacre perpetrated at Babi Yar during World War II. Various cooperation agreements — in agriculture, science and technology, and culture and education — and an agreement for direct commercial flights between the two countries were signed during the visit. Yet another visitor in January was President Askar Akaev from the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, the first Muslim head of state to visit Israel since President Sadat of Egypt in 1977.

Hungarian foreign minister Geza Jeszensky, who also visited in January, held talks with Israeli leaders on current regional and Central European topics. Prime Minister Rabin conveyed to him Israel’s thanks for the role played by Hungary in acting as a transit point for hundreds of thousands of Israel-bound immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Prime Minister Rabin visited Poland in April, although diplomacy as such took second place on the trip. The occasion was the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, held on April 19 at the site of the former ghetto. Thousands of visitors from around the world, including U.S. vice-president Al Gore, were present.

Israel pressed its efforts to deepen ties with Turkey, which it had long viewed as a key player in the region. In April Foreign Minister Shimon Peres attended the funeral of Turkey’s president, Turgut Orzal, in Ankara, and received expressions of appreciation from Turkish officials for the high-level Israeli representation. In October senior officials from the Foreign Ministry visited Turkey to brief their counterparts on the Israel-PLO accord. The following month, Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin became the most senior Turkish official ever to visit Israel. The two countries agreed to cooperate in the struggle to contain the spread of Islamic
fundamentalism and to hold intelligence consultations on Iran.

Israel and Estonia concluded economic agreements during a four-day visit by Prime Minister Mart Laar in July. In November Foreign Minister Peres became the first Israeli cabinet member to visit Albania, with whom it had established relations in 1991. Peres arrived in Tirana on Albania's national day and was the guest of honor at some of the state ceremonies. Bulgarian president Zhelyu Zhelev, heading a large entourage, paid a three-day visit in December, the first by a head of state from Bulgaria. President Weizman and Prime Minister Rabin used separate occasions to thank the Bulgarian people for saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

One of the main topics on the agenda during the three-day visit of Czech foreign minister Josef Zileniec in December was his country's arms sales to various Arab states. Zileniec told Prime Minister Rabin that the Czech Republic would not sell additional weapons to Syria and denied reports of a deal to sell nuclear technology to Iran. The question of Jewish property appropriated by the Czech Communist regime also came up. (Israel established diplomatic relations with both the Czech Republic and Slovakia in January.)

JAPAN, CHINA, AND INDIA

The still hesitant relations between Israel and Japan got a historic boost in March when the two countries signed a treaty to prevent double taxation, which would facilitate Israel-Japan commercial relations. It was the first treaty ever concluded with Japan, which was gradually disengaging from its strict compliance with the Arab boycott. In the same month, a delegation from Japan's Agency of Industrial Science and Technology visited Israel to assess the feasibility of high-tech cooperation between the two countries.

On February 14, Israel and China began to infuse their nascent diplomatic relations with content when Prime Minister Rabin and visiting Deputy Minister of Science Li Xiao Shi signed a scientific cooperation agreement in Jerusalem. The accord provided for joint research in a variety of fields, including civilian uses of space science and medical instrumentation. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres paid a six-day visit to China in May, his talks covering a wide range of bilateral issues, including economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. In October Yitzhak Rabin became the first Israeli head of government to visit China. During his five-day stay he met with Premier Li Peng, Defense Minister Chi Haotian, and other senior officials. The talks, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, were "friendly and sincere." Rabin's entourage included Bank of Israel governor Jacob Frenkel and leading businessmen and industrialists. Concretely, the visit produced an aviation agreement involving El Al and Air China and an agreement to establish reciprocal consulates.

In March the director-general of India's Foreign Ministry, Jyotindra Nath Dixit, became the most senior official from his country to visit Israel, meeting with Foreign Minister Peres during a two-day stay. The following month, El Al and Air India signed an agreement to introduce mutual direct flights. Foreign Minister Peres also
visited India in May, on his way to China (see above). During his two-day stay he met with President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and signed an agreement regularizing consultations between the two foreign ministries.

AFRICAN NATIONS

The ambassadors of two countries with which Israel had renewed relations in 1992, Nigeria and Gambia, presented their credentials in April. In May Israel renewed relations with Sierra Leone and established ties with Eritrea, formerly part of Ethiopia. During a four-day visit by Ethiopian prime minister Ato Tamirat Layne that month, Israel agreed to accept more Ethiopian agricultural students and to send medical experts to Ethiopia. Also on the agenda, Layne noted, was "security assistance." In July Mozambique announced its agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

On September 27, Foreign Minister Peres had a meeting with Nelson Mandela, the president of the African National Congress, while the two were attending the meeting of the UN General Assembly session in New York. It was Mandela's first meeting with an Israeli cabinet minister. Peres told Mandela that Israel was pleased that South Africa's black population had "gained [its] equality at the same time as the Palestinians gained their identity," referring to the Israel-PLO agreement signed two weeks earlier. While he was in New York, Peres also signed documents to reestablish Israel's diplomatic relations with Gabon and Mauritius. The two nations had severed their ties with Israel at the time of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Relations with Burkina Faso were also renewed that month. At year's end, Israel maintained full diplomatic ties with 26 countries of black Africa.

United Nations

The declared policies of the new Labor government seemed to cause a reorientation in the United Nations, where Israel had long been relegated to a semi-pariah status. The warm reception given Israel by the General Assembly at the end of 1992 was emulated by the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which had been at loggerheads with Israel for years. In March, UNESCO's director-general, Dr. Federico Mayor, paid the first visit of its kind to Israel and declared that UNESCO was no longer subject to "politicization and mismanagement." On September 17, UNESCO announced that the recipients of its third annual peace prize would be Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Peres, and PLO chairman Arafat. Announcing this at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger, who chaired the panel that decided on the winners, said that there was "no doubt" about who should get the prize: "In this dramatic year, the signing of the accord between Israel and the PLO was by far the most important event."

On December 14, Israel had further reason to be pleased with the UN after the
General Assembly adopted, by a vote of 155–3 (Iran, Lebanon, and Syria; Libya abstained), a resolution asserting the UN's backing for the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles and the Israel-Jordan Common Agenda. The resolution was sponsored by Israel, the United States, and Russia. It was, according to a spokesperson for the Israeli embassy in Washington, "the first instance in over two decades in which the UN expressed unequivocal support for the Middle East peace process."

Despite this, only four countries besides Israel — the United States, Micronesia, the Dominican Republic, and the Marshall Islands — voted against a General Assembly resolution adopted on December 20 that called on Israel to withdraw from "the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories." Ninety-two nations voted for the resolution, which also described the settlements in the territories as "illegal and an obstacle to peace"; 51 countries abstained.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Although hopes for a qualitative improvement in security were raised by the Israeli-PLO accord, violence as a means to resolve what were essentially political problems remained deeply embedded in the daily fabric of Israeli (and Palestinian) life. Approximately 80 Israelis were killed during the year in combat and in terrorist attacks (according to data, some of it contradictory, issued by the army, the police, and human-rights groups). Of this number, Lebanon claimed the lives of 26 soldiers; 19 members of the security forces were killed in the territories and 8 inside Israel; and 35 civilians were killed in attacks by Palestinians, the great majority (29) in the territories. These figures represented a twofold increase over 1992 in the number of those killed from the security forces and a threefold increase in the number of civilian deaths.

The approximately 165 Palestinians killed by the security forces in the territories, 60 percent of them in the Gaza Strip, represented a rise of about 35 percent over 1992. According to Deputy Chief of Staff Amnon Shahak, "initiated operations" by the special units against the "hard core of wanted individuals" accounted for 36 of the Palestinians who were killed (another 208 wanted Palestinians were captured, according to this source). The most dramatic leap was in the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the territories: fourteen in 1993, as against one in 1992. The number of Palestinians killed by other Palestinians on suspicion of collaboration with Israel was about half of the previous year's 238.

The Yesha (acronym, meaning "salvation," for Judea, Samaria, Gaza) Council claimed at year's end that there were 136,415 Jews residing in the territories (excluding the post-1967 Jerusalem neighborhoods), up more than 10,000 from the previous year. The Central Bureau of Statistics put the Jewish population in the territories at 115,300, living in 136 settlements. About a quarter of the population lived in the two large "nonideological" urban settlements of Ma'aleh Adumim (nearly 20,000) and Ariel (nearly 13,000).
The Intifada

THE DEPORTATION OF THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP

On January 1, two weeks after Israel expelled 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists from the territories across the border into Lebanon, just north of the Israeli-controlled security zone, for a two-year period of exile, Prime Minister Rabin stated that the deportees could begin returning within six to nine months if the Palestinians agreed to call off the intifada immediately. More realistically, Israel announced that ten of the deportees, one of them a 16-year-old boy, had been expelled by mistake (the number later rose to 15) and could return, though, for logistical reasons, not at once.

Opposition to the mass deportation continued to be voiced by human-rights groups. B'Tselem condemned the move as "hasty," citing those deported by mistake as proof. Both Justice Minister David Libai and Attorney General Yosef Harish admitted that they had been apprised of the deportation only minutes before the cabinet vote in December. More unexpectedly, Gen. Antoine Lahad, commander of the Israeli-supported South Lebanese Army (SLA), objected to the deportation for "political and humanitarian" reasons. In any event, he added, there were already "enough Palestinians" in Lebanon.

Israel's only concession to UN efforts on behalf of the deportees was to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to take medical supplies to the deportees and evacuate the very ill. On January 23, the Red Cross flew out 17 deportees in three British RAF helicopters. Four were admitted to Marjayoun Hospital in the Israeli-controlled security zone in southern Lebanon, while the other 13, who were among those deported by mistake, were taken back to the territories, where most of them were immediately imprisoned.

On January 15, the High Court of Justice, sitting in a special panel of seven justices headed by court president Meir Shamgar, began hearings on the petitions that had been filed against the legality of the mass deportation by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and others. In a 150-page reply on behalf of the government, Attorney General Harish invoked the "deteriorating internal security situation" and the mounting terrorism perpetrated by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Lawyers representing ACRI and the families of some of the deportees (23 of whom petitioned the High Court) argued that the expelled men had been denied the right to a hearing — a right confirmed in a previous High Court decision — and that the entire action violated international law.

On January 28, the court unanimously upheld the deportation, ruling that the Defense (Emergency) Regulations promulgated in 1945 by the British Mandate authorities were applicable in the occupied territories. According to Regulation 112 (1, 3), "The High Commissioner shall have the power to make an order under his hand . . . requiring any person to leave and remain out of Palestine..." That said, the court quashed the general deportation order issued by the army (the present
sovereign authority in the territories), but ruled that each *individual* order was valid since it was based on information relating to the person involved. In other words, the High Court stated, the action should not be regarded as a "collective order," which would contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention, but as a "collection of individual orders." (The High Court had previously ruled that individual deportations were permissible under the Geneva Convention.)

As for denying the right to a hearing before expulsion, the court found this to be intolerable, unless extraordinary specific circumstances prevailed. The court therefore ordered the IDF to make arrangements for hearing appeals by the deportees, stipulating only that a site be chosen that would insure "proper" proceedings. However, the deportees spurned the High Court's decision, demanding that the UN implement Resolution 799 from December 1992, calling on Israel to return the deportees. Although Prime Minister Rabin declared that the High Court had vindicated the government's decision, Israel was under heavy pressure to take action that would be perceived as a compromise in order to remove the issue from the international agenda and enable the resumption of the peace talks.

On January 29, Secretary of State Warren Christopher told the prime minister by phone that the United States did not want to be placed in a position where it would have to veto a UN Security Council resolution that would impose sanctions on Israel. That would be inimical to the peace process, Christopher said, by undermining Washington's "honest broker" status and creating, or reinforcing, the Arabs' impression of an administration bias toward Israel.

Finally, on February 1, the cabinet, in effect yielding to international pressure, voted unanimously to permit "about 100" of the deportees, of Israel's choosing, to return immediately, with the rest to be allowed back in one year instead of two. In addition, Israel would assist in flying in supplies to the tent camp, and the appeals procedure would continue. The deportees rejected the arrangements, insisting that either all of them return together or none would go back. The PLO took the same position, branding the compromise a "maneuver" designed to sidestep Resolution 799.

Nevertheless, on February 12, following intensive behind-the-scenes talks stage-managed by Washington, the Security Council reaffirmed Resolution 799 "and the need for its implementation," but also "welcome[d]" Israel's agreement to allow 101 deportees to return immediately. In the event, none of the deportees (other than five who had been hospitalized in the security zone and were on the list of the 101) took advantage of the opportunity to return.

However, on August 15, the 396 remaining deportees (19 had been brought back to Israel for various reasons) decided to accept the Israeli offer to return in two groups. A first group of 181 deportees came back on September 9; they were questioned at detention centers and most were released. On December 15, one day after "Hamas Day," on which the organization marked the anniversary of its founding, another 197 deportees returned, but 18 others elected to stay in Lebanon rather than face lengthy imprisonment in Israel. It was unclear what impact the
arrival of this large group of hardened Hamas and Islamic Jihad ideologues and militants would have on the already volatile situation in the territories and in the Gaza Strip especially. What was certain, as a commentator in *Ha'aretz* noted, was that the deportation and the tremendous publicity it generated had put Hamas on the international map and gained it new adherents in the territories.

**The Intifada Continues**

On January 25, two Arab-Americans, Mohammed Abd al-Hamid Salah and Mohammed Jarad, were arrested in the West Bank on suspicion of distributing funds to local Hamas cells. The two had arrived from the United States earlier in the month, in the wake of the mass deportation of Islamic fundamentalists to Lebanon, which left Hamas and Islamic Jihad in disarray. Jarad was a minor figure (he would receive a six-month sentence in a plea-bargain deal), but Salah turned out to be a different story. The 45-year-old used-car salesman from Chicago, who reportedly hailed from a West Bank refugee camp, was named the "world commander" of Hamas's military arm, accused of plotting to kill Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, a leading Fatah moderate in the West Bank, of setting up the initial infrastructure of Hamas's military arm in 1987, and of providing large sums of money, taken from American bank accounts, to Hamas commanders. Prior to his arrest, Salah had distributed $130,000, and another $100,000 in cash was found in his hotel room. At year's end, Salah's trial was continuing behind closed doors in Ramallah.

Gaza literally seethed with violence throughout the year, the sixth year of the *intifada*. On January 19, a settler shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy after his vehicle was stoned at a traffic intersection in Gaza City. The man later turned himself in. Earlier in the week, a 14-year-old boy was killed when the security forces broke up a Hamas demonstration in the Gaza Strip's Shati refugee camp. At the cabinet meeting on January 17, Environment Minister Yossi Sarid noted the sharp rise in the number of children killed by Israeli soldiers in the territories and urged that the army be given operative instructions to reduce the phenomenon.

On January 30, two Israeli soldiers were killed and another was wounded when their patrol jeep was ambushed at a settlement in the Gaza Strip. It was the first fatal attack on Israeli forces in the territories since the deportation of the Islamic activists. Responsibility was claimed by Ez a-Din el Kassam, the Kassam Brigades, Hamas's military arm, which said that the attack was its reaction to the decision by the High Court of Justice to approve the deportation (see above). Five Palestinians were killed on February 5 by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip. Three of them, from Jabalya refugee camp, died when soldiers at a checkpoint opened fire on a car containing four armed men. That incident triggered rioting at two other refugee camps and in Rafah, accounting for the two other deaths; one of the victims was a 14-year-old boy. Demonstrators in Gaza Strip refugee camps defied a general strike the following day, and a 17-year-old youth from Jabalya was killed by security forces. Some 50 Gazans were wounded in the two days of riots. Responding to
criticism of its "rules of engagement," the IDF claimed that the orders had not been changed. Rubber bullets were the standard ammunition, although if soldiers were in mortal danger — as in Jabalya on February 6, when iron bars and bricks were hurled at them — they could resort to live bullets.

A generally unknown facet of the intifada came to light on February 9 with the murder in the Gaza Strip of a produce dealer from Holon, near Tel Aviv. The victim had reportedly been involved in smuggling fruits, vegetables, and poultry from the territories into Israel, activity said to be worth about 2 billion shekels a year. (The importation of Palestinian agricultural goods into Israel from the territories was illegal.)

On February 24, the army closed down Islamic University and Al-Azhar College in Gaza for a week in the aftermath of a demonstration by students in which two armed men participated and a raid by security forces on the campus which turned up inflammatory leaflets and fake weapons. On March 2, following a vicious terrorist attack in Tel Aviv (see below), the Israeli authorities sealed off the Gaza Strip for six days.

By this time it was obvious that the deportation of Islamic activists to Lebanon had done little to reduce "personal terrorism" against civilians and soldiers. On March 8, the day after the Gaza Strip was reopened following the six-day closure, a resident of Moshav Gan Or in the Katif Bloc was stabbed to death by some of the Palestinian workers whom he was driving to his hothouse. The Fatah Hawks claimed responsibility for the murder. In a clash between settlers and Palestinians later that day, one Palestinian was shot dead. Four days later, in a similar incident, a 45-year-old woman who earned money by driving workers from Gaza into Israel was axed to death in her van by three men who had apparently been dressed as women when she picked them up. (The other passengers had fled.) This time responsibility was taken by the Red Eagles, from George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The incidents brought to light another fact of which many Israelis were unaware: some 2,000 Palestinians were employed by the 5,000 settlers in the Gaza Strip, mainly in agriculture. On March 12, the Katif Bloc settlers said they would no longer hire Gazans and that the current workers would be phased out.

The West Bank, like Gaza, was the scene of continuing violence — some of it carried out by Jewish settlers but most of it emanating from Hamas and other extremist groups.

On February 14, an Israeli couple was wounded near Kiryat Arba when gunmen opened fire on them from a passing car, a tactic that would become a virtual Hamas trademark. Civil Administration and IDF vehicles, buildings, and outposts were frequent targets of grenade and firebomb attacks.

On March 15, two Israeli hitchhikers in their 20s, were killed when a Palestinian deliberately ran into them with his van near the settlement of Eli, in Samaria. Two days later, settlers went on the rampage in the nearby village of Luban Sharqiyya, completely destroying a Palestinian-owned gas station.
Yoram Shkolnik, a 26-year-old American immigrant living in the West Bank, shot and killed a terrorist on March 23. What made the shooting unusual was that the victim, Mussa Abu Sabha, was lying on the ground, blindfolded, his hands and feet bound, when he was shot. Sabha had been captured and disarmed after stabbing a settler from Susya. Shkolnik, a resident of the nearby settlement of Ma'aleh Hever, who had heard about the incident on the radio, drove to the site, walked over to the man on the ground, and shot him. His lawyer afterward claimed that the larger context — the wave of terrorism and the calls by the country's leaders for citizens to be more active in combating terrorism — should be taken into account. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres described the act as an execution and said it had brought "shame" on the state and the security forces, who were known for their "humane behavior." Shkolnik was later charged with premeditated murder.

Israel proper was not immune to terrorist incursions and attacks. On January 15, a knife-wielding terrorist from Gaza, who was in Israel illegally, stabbed four passersby at the Tel Aviv central bus station before he was shot and killed by an Israeli shop assistant. Jerusalem, and especially the post-1967 Armon Hanatziv (East Talpiot) neighborhood bordering on the Palestinian village of Jabl Mukabr, continued to experience murderous violence. On February 15, a man was killed in a stabbing attack as he waited for a bus in the neighborhood, and a woman was seriously wounded. The assailant fled toward Jabl Mukabr.

On March 1, a 19-year-old knife-wielding youth from Gaza went on a murderous rampage in downtown Tel Aviv, stabbing 11 people, two of whom died of their wounds. The attacker was finally overpowered by passersby who pummeled him until the police arrived. Islamic Jihad said it had carried out the attack in retaliation for the mass deportation of activists to Lebanon and "international contempt for the rights of our people." The following day, the Israeli authorities sealed off the Gaza Strip for six days.

The body of Yehoshua Friedberg, a former Canadian, aged 24, who attended a Jerusalem yeshivah, was found near the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway on March 12. He had been kidnapped five days earlier while on the way to Tel Hashomer army base in Tel Aviv. On the day that Friedberg's body was found, national police chief Ya'akov Terner urged all Israelis who had permits to carry a weapon at all times, in order to "contribute to their own security and the security of their surroundings." Terner noted that in several recent incidents civilians had shot terrorists in the act even before police could get to the scene.

As terrorism intensified, so did the attacks on the government by the settlers and their allies in the nationalist and religious opposition parties. On the evening of March 13 (a Saturday), with Rabin in the United States for talks with the new administration, settlers demonstrated at the Erez checkpoint and next to the homes of three ministers to protest the "deterioration in security." In the Knesset, Likud MK Benjamin Netanyahu submitted a bill to suspend temporarily the right of Palestinians to turn to the High Court of Justice before being deported. Netanyahu said that the country was in an "emergency situation" in which "[e]very day
someone is stabbed, every afternoon, every evening." The bill was defeated (23–22) in its preliminary reading.

On March 16, Rabin announced that he was canceling the final part of his planned visit to the United States (meetings with leaders of the Jewish community) and returning home to deal personally with the escalation in terrorism. Rabin may have made this decision after recalling that six years earlier, in December 1987, when he was minister of defense in the Likud-Labor national unity government, he had decided to proceed with a visit to the United States despite a sudden eruption of mass violence in the Gaza Strip. Once in the States, he had rejected calls for his early return as the violence swept through the territories. That turned out to be the start of the intifada, and Rabin never lived down his misreading of the situation.

Returning on March 19, Rabin gave a foretaste of what was to come when he said that he would like to see fewer Palestinians working in Israel, which would reduce "the level of danger." However, he added, the only viable long-term solution was peace. On Saturday evening, March 20, about 4,000 people gathered in front of Prime Minister Rabin's home in north Tel Aviv and hundreds more at his official residence in Jerusalem to call for his resignation and demand drastic measures to put a stop to Palestinian violence. Rabin told the weekly cabinet meeting on March 21 that there were "no magic solutions" to terrorism—not even the cabinet's approval that day to hire 1,500 more police. PLO leader Yasir Arafat, speaking over Monte Carlo Radio, called on the Palestinians in the territories to "burn the earth under the feet of the occupiers."

In the predawn hours of March 30, two policemen were shot to death in their patrol car in Wadi Arra near Hadera. The Kassam Brigades issued a statement claiming that the attack was a "gift to the Palestinian people on Land Day" (marked annually on March 30 by Israel's Arabs to commemorate the six Arabs who were killed by the security forces in 1976 during demonstrations held to protest land expropriations in Galilee).

That same day, Prime Minister Rabin convened an emergency meeting of the inner cabinet (the ministerial committee on security). The decision was to close off the West Bank, in addition to Gaza, "until further notice." There would also be a crackdown on Palestinians who stayed overnight in Israel. As public pressure mounted to stem the bloody tide of terror, Rabin told Israel Television that "we have never submitted to terrorism and we never will. . . . Those who remain steadfast and do not tire will be the victors." He informed the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee that the security forces in the territories were now authorized to fire at sight on Palestinians carrying arms. Commandos and other special units were dispatched to the Gaza Strip in an effort to boost security and work with the Shin Bet (undercover General Security Service) to root out terrorist cells.

An immediate effect of the sealing of the territories was to cause havoc in the construction industry, which for a generation had relied heavily on Palestinian cheap labor. Responding to Prime Minister Rabin's call for a separation between "the sovereign territory of Israel" and the territories, the Contractors Association
announced that it would “immediately” replace the 70,000 Palestinians who worked in the industry with Israeli Jews. However, this was easier said than done: for years the construction industry, like the agricultural sector, had attracted few Israelis because they would not work for the below-minimum wages which the Palestinians accepted.

A meeting of the heads of the opposition parties, called by newly elected Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, demanded both that Prime Minister Rabin resign and that the government declare a state of emergency. Netanyahu said the closure of the territories was “too little, too late.” In a stormy Knesset debate (April 8), the opposition sounded the major theme it would play on for the rest of the year. The government, its speakers said, was “soft on the Arabs,” and the proof was that the security situation had deteriorated to the point where 15 Israelis had been killed in March. Prime Minister Rabin stated that the government’s measures sought to reverse the feeling of “insecurity” among much of the public owing to the ubiquitous presence of more than 110,000 Palestinians from the territories who worked in Israel. Rabin claimed that already after only a week there had been “a change in the atmosphere.”

Certainly such a change could be felt in the territories. The prices of some staples, normally imported from Israel, began to rise almost immediately. Unemployment shot up because many of the Palestinians were day laborers. (According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Palestinians from the territories employed in Israel averaged out at 84,000 for the year, a decline of some 28 percent from the 116,000 of 1992. There was a concomitant rise of 14 percent in the number of Palestinians who worked in their place of residence. Approximately 27 percent of the workforce in both Gaza and the West Bank was employed in Israel.) The Palestinians were also cut off from East Jerusalem, their traditional commercial, spiritual, and intellectual center. East Jerusalem merchants and others, in turn, saw their incomes plummet owing to a dearth of customers. Some lawyers, as well as physicians from Jerusalem hospitals, were given permits to enter. However, West Bank Palestinians who needed to get to Al-Muqassed Hospital in East Jerusalem urgently, or to Hadassah Hospital in West Jerusalem for ongoing treatment, were usually turned back.

Still, it was impossible to reverse overnight a situation that had developed over nearly three decades. The government came under enormous pressure to relax the closure from labor-intensive sectors, such as agriculture and construction, although garages, restaurants, municipal sanitation departments, and the like were also hard hit. A week after the closure was introduced, permission was granted for 3,000 workers from the territories to enter Israel daily.

On April 15, Prime Minister Rabin declared that the two-week closure had achieved “all its objectives.” The incidence of terrorism had fallen sharply, and even though the closure “cannot be a permanent solution,” it had made a “deep psychological impact” on the territories. The Palestinians “will get nothing without negotiations,” the prime minister said. (The bilateral talks were still stalled at this
On April 18, an Israeli lawyer was stabbed, axed, and shot in the Gaza Strip office of the European Community’s Cooperation for Development agency. Widespread rioting, in which two youths were killed and some 80 people were wounded, erupted in Nuseirat refugee camp and in Gaza’s Sheikh Redwan neighborhood on April 20 and 21 after troops killed two popular Hamas activists and arrested several others.

With the resumption of bilateral peace talks in Washington at the end of April, Israel agreed to make several “goodwill gestures”: it approved the immediate return of 30 of the more than 1,200 Palestinians deported between 1967 and 1987 (that is, prior to the start of the intifada); it gave permanent-resident status to about 5,000 relatives of Palestinians who were in the territories contrary to regulations; and it rescinded an earlier decision to demolish hundreds of homes built in the territories without permits. Nevertheless, on April 27, Hamas and other rejectionist groups declared a strike in the territories to protest the renewal of the talks.

The resumption of the peace process was anathema to some Israelis as well. On April 26, Israel’s Independence Day, which was the day before the bilateral talks reopened, about 20,000 settlers and their supporters marched through the Katif Bloc to assert the Jewish presence in the area and reject proposals for Israel to withdraw unilaterally from Gaza as the first step in a settlement with the Palestinians (“Gaza first”). In Jerusalem, some 4,000 people turned out on April 28 for a rally organized by four opposition parties to mark — in the words of Likud leader Netanyahu — the “struggle for Jerusalem” and “the struggle against abandoning the Golan and Judea and Samaria, and against the establishment of a Palestinian state.”

The return of the first 15 of the veteran deportees on April 30 (Israel had insisted that they come in two groups, and 14 more arrived on May 3) touched off fervent celebrations. Palestinian flags were blatantly, and illegally, held aloft as the returnees alighted from the bus that had brought them across the Allenby Bridge from Jordan. Now mostly middle-aged, they had been expelled two decades or more earlier when Israel sought to prevent the emergence of an indigenous nationalist leadership in the territories.

On April 30 (a Friday), a committee of three ministers — Rabin, Namir, and Ben-Eliezer — decided that beginning the following Sunday another 10,000 Palestinians from the territories would be permitted to work at construction sites in Israel. This brought the number of construction workers from the territories to 15,000. Together with several thousand Israelis recruited into construction work since the closure of the territories, the decision would enable the contractors to complete their current building projects. The ministers acted after the contractors said they would shut down the construction industry unless thousands of foreign workers were brought in to replace the Palestinians.

On May 10, Prime Minister Rabin, replying in the Knesset to opposition no-confidence motions on the peace process (defeated by the coalition 56–47), noted that since the closure had been imposed six weeks earlier, no Israelis had been killed.
inside the Green Line and 81 wanted Palestinians had been captured or had escaped across the border to Egypt. A day earlier, Rabin and Labor and Social Affairs Minister Namir had decided to allow another 5,000 Gazans to enter Israel every day as construction workers. Nearly 40,000 Palestinians now had permits to work in Israel, half of them in construction.

In the Gaza Strip the cycle of violence continued, with both soldiers and local residents wounded in various attacks. On May 19, the commissioner-general of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), Ilter Turkmen, met in Jerusalem with Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin to complain about what he called “trigger-happy” Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip. Turkmen said he was particularly “shocked” by the large number of casualties among children. (According to a report by B’Tselem, 34 Palestinians aged 16 or below were killed in the territories during the six-month period beginning December 9, 1992 — the fifth anniversary of the start of the intifada.) Similar charges were voiced by the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, who met on May 23 with Prime Minister Rabin.

The army, in response, issued a statement noting that soldiers were forced to fire at demonstrators when they were in danger and that during the closure period “most of those killed have been violent and dangerous terrorists, and not innocent bystanders.” The IDF Spokesman greatly regretted that some of the victims were children, explaining: “Most of the children were hit by accident, as a result of being in the area of the incident.” Overall, the army’s rules of engagement barred the use of “open fire when children are in the vicinity, and irregularities are dealt with accordingly.” In no case, the statement said, did Israeli forces open fire indiscriminately. Finally, every precaution was taken to minimize injuries and prevent damage to adjacent structures during operations to force terrorists from houses where they had barricaded themselves.

The economic effects of the closure were felt not only by the Palestinians. Finance Minister Avraham Shohat warned the cabinet on May 23 that the prolonged closure would have a deleterious effect on the economy. He pointed out that although the nearly 120,000 workers from the territories accounted for only about 6 percent of the total labor force in Israel, they made up some 45 percent of the workforce in construction and about 20 percent in agriculture. (By year’s end, some 2,000 Thais had arrived to do farm work, and in December, Prime Minister Rabin, in his capacity as interior minister, overrode the objections of Labor and Social Affairs Minister Ora Namir and approved the request of the Katif Bloc, which had been pending for two years, to bring in 500 Thai workers. They were to replace Palestinian laborers following the IDF’s withdrawal as part of the Israel-PLO agreement.)

The ultra-Orthodox Jewish presence in Hebron, a traditional Islamic stronghold, continued to produce a litany of violence. On May 28, a student from a Kiryat Arba yeshivah was stabbed to death while he was on his way to the Friday evening services in the Cave of Machpelah (Tomb of the Patriarchs) in Hebron. Hundreds of settlers
streamed to the site to pray after news of the killing spread. Some threw stones at vehicles driven by Palestinians on the Jerusalem-Hebron road.

On June 5, the heads of the security establishment took the opportunity of some rare good news — a successful large-scale operation against Hamas — to congratulate themselves in public and, presumably, boost public morale. In a dramatic Saturday-night press conference, military correspondents were informed by the prime minister, the police minister, the chief of staff, the national police chief, and senior officials of the Shin Bet that 120 Hamas activists had been arrested and a number of recent terrorist murders solved. Amidst all the self-praise, Chief of Staff Barak added a cautionary note. Terrorism against Israelis, he said, had not come to an end because of this operation.

In fact it struck again with a powerful and tragic impact in Jerusalem on July 1. Early that morning, as a packed rush-hour bus pulled away from a stop in northern Jerusalem, three Hamas terrorists who had just boarded the vehicle carrying concealed firearms and explosives pulled out their weapons, but were spotted by the driver and another passenger, who grappled with them. During the melee, the Palestinians got off a few shots, killing a Russian immigrant woman and wounding the driver and another woman passenger. One of the terrorists also took a bullet in the head. After the bus skidded to a stop, the two unwounded terrorists were able to escape. They had left bombs behind on the bus and also scattered a few explosive devices during their flight (all these were neutralized by the police).

The two commandeered a car driven by a 39-year-old mother of four from the Musrara neighborhood opposite the Old City. When the police and army finally chased down the car, near the Gilo neighborhood in southern Jerusalem, she was shot dead and thrown (or pushed) from the car; the vehicle, a small Renault 5, plowed into a tree and burst into flames. Both terrorists died in the blaze. Leaflets found on the bus indicated that the plan had been to hold the passengers hostage for the release of security prisoners, including Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, kidnapped by Israel from southern Lebanon in 1989, and for the return of the deportees from Lebanon.

Incidents continued throughout the summer. The first week in August was particularly grim, perhaps in reaction to the IDF's big operation the previous week against Hezbollah, Hamas's ideological twin, in Lebanon (see below). (Graffiti scrawled on Gaza walls had vowed revenge for "Operation Accountability.") On August 2, one Israeli was killed and five Israelis were injured, two seriously, in Gaza City when a gunman who had taken over a bus carrying UNRWA employees (after ordering the passengers off) deliberately rammed into two Israeli vehicles.

In the West Bank, on August 5, a soldier who was hitchhiking to Jerusalem was abducted by three bearded men in a van just north of the city. Hours later, after frantic searches by the security forces, his charred body was found in the van, which had been abandoned and torched not far from the site of the kidnapping. He had been shot and his rifle and other equipment taken. Islamic Jihad took responsibility. The next day, two more soldiers were killed near Tulkarm when two Hamas gunmen
opened fire from a passing car at the roadblock they were manning. Another soldier, in a lookout above, shot at the assailants, killing one and wounding another; the third escaped.

In a controversial aftermath, one of the dead, a Russian immigrant, was buried "outside the fence" in the military section of Beit She'an cemetery because his mother was not Jewish and therefore, according to Jewish religious law, neither was he. Only after intervention by Prime Minister Rabin, in his capacity as defense minister, was the young man buried among other fallen soldiers. The episode caused a public furor and drew outraged condemnation from the government, the highest ranks of the army, and some Orthodox rabbis. (In a similar incident at year's end, Rabin confirmed the decision by the IDF's chief rabbi not to bury a Jewish soldier next to the grave of Col. Amos Yarkoni in the military cemetery of Tel Aviv. Yarkoni, a Muslim who had taken a Jewish name, had commanded the elite Shaked reconnaissance unit. Many retired high-ranking officers who had served with Yarkoni were outraged by the incident, the more so as they had not realized that the section of the cemetery where Yarkoni was interred was reserved for non-Jews.)

On August 22, the body of a new immigrant from Russia who worked as a night watchman was found at a construction site in the West Bank town of Ma'aleh Adumim, just south of Jerusalem. He had been murdered two days earlier, apparently by terrorists. On September 2, the occupants of a car bearing Israeli license plates, which was parked along the roadside south of Hebron, opened fire on an Israeli army jeep as it passed by. One reserve soldier, the driver, was killed and a second was lightly wounded.

As soon as the Israel-PLO agreement was signed at Oslo on August 20, internecine Palestinian violence erupted between supporters and opponents of the accord. On September 12, the eve of the signing ceremony in Washington, Hamas demonstrated its potential for derailing the process. An ambush by the Kassam Brigades that day in the Gaza Strip took the lives of three IDF reservists. All three were from Israel's Druze community. The gunmen left behind a note saying that the operation was a "gift for Arafat" for betraying the Palestinian people by signing an agreement with Israel.

AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE ISRAEL-PLO AGREEMENT

On September 14, the day after the Washington ceremony, a suicide bomber was blown to pieces when the explosives he was carrying on his person went off prematurely as he tried to burst into a police station in Gaza. Another assailant was shot to death after he had lightly wounded a soldier in a stabbing attack next to Gaza city hall. Four soldiers manning a checkpoint near Hebron were wounded that night, two of them seriously, when they were fired on by the occupants of a car. One of the gunmen was later killed by pursuing Israeli forces. Hamas took responsibility for the attack.

A string of attacks followed from September 15 to the 18th, as a renewed total
closure was imposed on the territories while Israeli Jews celebrated the advent of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah). On September 18, thousands of people attended a Hamas-sponsored assembly in Gaza City to protest the Israel-PLO agreement. The event also featured a welcome for some of the deportees who had returned from Lebanon.

It was unclear whether Hamas was behind the murder, on September 21, of Muhammad Sha’aban, aged 36, a leading Fatah activist and pragmatist in the Gaza Strip. He was shot to death by masked gunmen as he emerged from a rally in support of the Israel-PLO agreement. A few days earlier, members of the Fatah Hawks killed two suspected collaborators with Israel in Jabalya refugee camp, defying Yasir Arafat's directive to all PLO affiliates to desist from violence against Israelis and against other Palestinians.

Certainly Hamas was not bound by such orders. On September 24, the eve of Yom Kippur, the body of a 22-year-old Israeli was found in a citrus grove at Moshav Basra, near Ra'anana. He had been stabbed to death in the predawn hours of September 23. A note signed by Hamas was found on the body. (A member of the Kassam Brigades was arrested in Khan Yunis on December 29 in connection with the murder.)

As the reality of an imminent IDF withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho began to sink in, the security forces stepped up their efforts to flush out wanted individuals who might seek refuge in those areas after the army left and try to disrupt the peace process. The Palestinians protested, claiming that the army's actions violated the Oslo agreement, and that true reconciliation demanded a "forgive and forget" approach. The PLO called a general strike in the West Bank on September 30 to protest the operation, and an official complaint was lodged by Dr. Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab and a special adviser to Yasir Arafat. Tibi said that Fatah had laid down its weapons at Arafat's order and that Israel should reciprocate by no longer pursuing fugitives. The security forces continued their raids.

On October 9, in the Judean Desert, terrorists brutally murdered two young Jerusalem hikers and then mutilated their bodies. In the almost ritual statement that followed every terrorist incident, Prime Minister Rabin declared that Israel would not reward the enemies of peace on both sides by breaking off the peace process. The right-wing opposition Likud all but held Rabin responsible for the murders, the Likud declaring that the incident was additional "painful evidence of the [results of the] miserable deal made by the prime minister with a terrorist organization."

In the second half of October, a series of apparently politically motivated killings rocked the Gaza Strip. One of those assassinated was Assad Siftawi, a popular grassroots figure, the leader of Fatah in Gaza, and a close friend of Yasir Arafat's. Like the others killed since the signing of the Israeli-PLO accord, Siftawi was an avowed supporter of the peace process.

On October 24, two reservists who were hitchhiking in the Katif Bloc of settlements in the Gaza Strip, became the latest soldiers to be abducted and murdered by Hamas gunmen. A leaflet issued immediately afterward by Hamas declared that
the organization would "go on shooting bullets into the skulls of the Jews, [in reaction] to the plot that Rabin and his dogs have concocted in order to mislead our people." Five days later, on October 29, a settler from Beit El, in the West Bank, was kidnapped, murdered, and stuffed into the trunk of his own car, which was then set ablaze. It later turned out that the perpetrators were not from Hamas, as had originally been thought, but from Arafat's Fatah organization, a fact that sparked a minicrisis in the peace negotiations.

On October 30, Ahmed Oudeh, a West Bank land dealer who had gained wide publicity in the 1980s for brokering deals between Israelis and Arabs and was regarded by many Palestinian militants as the embodiment of collaboration, was shot dead in Kalkilya, where he was making arrangements for his daughter's wedding later that day. On October 31, in the industrial zone at Erez checkpoint, an Israeli from Holon shot and killed an Arab employee who had stabbed him.

In Hebron, the situation remained volatile. On November 7, Palestinian gunmen came perilously close to taking the life of a prominent figure in the National Religious party, former MK Rabbi Haim Druckman. He escaped with light wounds, but his chauffeur was killed, when their car was sprayed with bullets near Hebron. Meeting that day with the head of Central Command, Maj. Gen. Nehemiah Tamari, leaders of the settlers demanded that Palestinians be barred from using the Trans-Judea road, on which the attack had occurred, for a month. When Tamari refused, the settlers said that they would block 50 road junctions in the territories the next morning. On the morning of November 8, hundreds of settlers, as good as their word, set up barriers at 49 junctions in the territories. The IDF, which had previously announced it would beef up its forces to prevent the action, did not intervene as the settlers effectively closed the roads to Palestinian vehicles.

In the Gaza Strip, at least ten hothouses belonging to Palestinians were torched, and some local Arabs were attacked. Two Jericho residents were shot and wounded lightly by unknown assailants near the West Bank settlement of Tapuah, known for the extremist views of its residents. Palestinian leader Faisal al-Husseini, who condemned "violence by both sides," said that if the Israeli government and the army could not protect the Palestinians, they would have to defend themselves. He called for an international police force to be stationed in the territories so that the Palestinians could feel secure.

On November 9, on the eve of a visit to the United States, Prime Minister Rabin met with members of the settlers' leadership for the first time in more than a year. It was agreed that a working committee, consisting of the heads of the Yesha Council and, on the other side, the director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, Shimon Sheves, and his assistants would deal with the settlers' ongoing problems. Subsequently, the council adopted a militant resolution declaring that "the uprooting of settlements is a flagrantly illegal act and must be resisted. ... The council will struggle forcefully against the government's policy to strangle the settlements." The council also decided not to cut off its nose to spite its face by asserting that: "At the same time, contact will be maintained with every operative level [i.e., in the
government] that is needed to preserve the settlement enterprise of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. . . ."

On November 12, a soldier was stabbed in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem and another Israeli was stabbed at Erez checkpoint in Gaza when he arrived to pick up workers. Both sustained moderate wounds. Three days later, a 40-year-old resident of Hebron's Jewish section was seriously wounded when two men attacked him with axes while he was going to early-morning prayers at the Cave of Machpela. Nevertheless, he managed to shoot and kill one of the assailants, who was from the PFLP, according to an announcement made by the organization in Damascus. Settlers from the area reacted by attacking Arabs, stoning vehicles, and damaging several buildings in Hebron. The next day, settlers led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the head of the Hebron Jewish community, went on a rampage in the local market, overturning produce stalls. A statement issued by the army following complaints made by Hebron merchants to the military governor said that soldiers had orders to deal firmly with both Arabs and Jews who disturbed the peace.

On November 17, a reserve soldier from Carmiel was stabbed to death while sitting in a café at the Kibbutz Nahal Oz checkpoint (on the Israeli side) of the Gaza Strip. His killer, a 19-year-old student at Islamic College in Gaza, was apprehended by a kibbutz member. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack and declared that the "jihad [holy war] will continue until the victory."

Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur said that PLO chairman Arafat must fulfill his part of the agreement with Israel by publicly ordering his camp in the territories to put an end to terrorism. However, on the same day, Prime Minister Rabin told ABC-TV's "Good Morning, America" program that Israel did not "hold Arafat responsible" for the actions of the Palestinian opponents of the peace process who were using violence in an attempt to bring the process to a halt.

As negotiations with the PLO to implement the agreement continued, albeit with little progress, the military announced a drive to capture wanted hard-core terrorists in the territories prior to the IDF's redeployment. In the final week of November, the security forces apprehended two senior Hamas figures wanted for various killings.

On November 30, violence swept the territories, with the Gaza Strip again the focal point. In Gaza City, Khan Yunis and Rafah, and in Shati, Jabalya, and al-Bureij refugee camps the clock seemed to have been turned back six years, to the first and mass phase of the intifada. When the day was over, a 15-year-old Palestinian lay dead, killed by mistake in Gaza City when soldiers opened fire at fleeing demonstrators, and at least 70 Palestinians were wounded in clashes with the security forces. The major difference between 1987 and 1993 was that in the latter case, it was possible for the head of Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Matan Vilnai, to sit with local Fatah leader Sami Abu Samahadana in an effort to restore at least a semblance of calm. At this meeting, it was agreed that the IDF would stop hunting down Fatah Hawks other than those wanted for murder (regarding them, separate talks would be held with senior Fatah leaders), downgrade the IDF's presence in
densely populated areas in order to reduce friction with local residents, unseal a number of houses, and remove various roadblocks. Fatah, for its part, promised to get the Hawks to maintain a low profile.

In late November, the disruptive tactics of settlers in the aftermath of attacks by Palestinians, in some cases involving clashes with soldiers, led newly appointed Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair to put forward proposals for dealing with “extremists” among the settlers. The Yesha Council alleged that its members were being treated as though they were Israel’s worst enemies: they were under surveillance by the Shin Bet, which had planted informants in Kiryat Arba and elsewhere, and their phones were tapped. Yesha Council spokesman Aharon Domb said that the government was out to “delegitimize” the settlers “because they oppose the peace process.”

As the December 13 deadline approached for the signing of the Israel-PLO interim agreement, following which the IDF would begin withdrawing from Gaza and Jericho, and with Secretary of State Warren Christopher due in Israel (on December 3) to begin another round of shuttle diplomacy, both Islamic fundamentalists and Jewish militants stepped up their activities. On December 1, terrorists killed two settlers; they died when shots were fired from a passing car at the car in which they were traveling as passengers, which had stalled on the side of the road near the Shilo settlement. That evening, right-wing activists demonstrated at about 20 intersections and other sites throughout Israel, and the next morning settlers again blocked road junctions throughout the territories to Palestinian traffic for about 90 minutes.

Settlers in Hebron who were stoned in the city on Friday, December 3 (the day of Christopher’s arrival), reacted by opening fire indiscriminately, wounding three Palestinians, one of them seriously. Officers and soldiers who were at the site did not intervene, other than to detain about 20 suspected stone throwers. This was the first in a two-day series of incidents involving settlers from Hebron. On December 5, Attorney General Ben-Yair accused the Yesha Council of “sedition” for trying to set up a voluntary, private militia of settlers and attempting to undermine the decisions of the country’s sovereign government.

On the morning of December 5, as the cabinet was considering the events of the weekend in Hebron, a 24-year-old resident of Jabalya refugee camp, who had boarded a bus at the busy Holon junction just outside Tel Aviv, suddenly pulled out an IDF-issue rifle from under his coat and opened fire. A reserve soldier was mortally wounded by the gunfire. The gunman was pushed out of the bus by the driver and shot to death by other soldiers. Press reports said he was the brother of the commander of the Damascus-based Islamic Jihad, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

Of all the killings of Israelis by Palestinians in 1993, probably the incident that generated the most intense emotion among the Israeli public was the murder of a settler from Kiryat Arba, Mordechai Lapid, and his 19-year-old son, Shalom. In the early evening of December 6 — two days after the killing of an Arab Hebron...
resident by settlers — Lapid, aged 56, the father of 13 children, a former “Prisoner of Zion” in the Soviet Union, and a veteran of the settlement movement, was sitting in his van at a deserted intersection adjacent to Hebron to make sure that Shalom, standing across the road, got a lift. The killers used the by-now familiar tactic of opening fire as they drove by. Three other sons, aged 17, 11, and 10, who were in the van, suffered light to moderate wounds. Lapid’s wife, Miriam, had been number four on the Knesset list of Rehavam Ze’evi’s transferist Moledet party in the 1992 elections. A few hours before the attack, in a speech to the founding meeting, in Tel Aviv, of an organization of right-wing ideologues and politicians dedicated to ousting the government and restoring the “true spirit of Zionism and the Jewish heritage,” she described the Israel-PLO accord as “an agreement of destruction [hurban] that will lead to the murder of Jews.”

Much right-wing rhetoric again imputed ultimate responsibility for the attack — which Hamas said it had carried out — to the government. Hundreds of settlers converged on the site of the attack. After exchanging angry words with army officers, they were permitted to erect a makeshift memorial. Others went on vigilante raids in Hebron — which was placed under what turned out to be a nine-day curfew — and in neighboring villages, while some blocked traffic at busy intersections inside Israel and demonstrated outside Prime Minister Rabin’s home in Tel Aviv and his office in Jerusalem. Rabin himself said that he had “no doubt that the objective of those who perpetrated this heinous murder is to generate a chain of events which will put an end to the political talks.”

The talks went on, and so did the demonstrations against them, which became increasingly raucous and verbally abusive toward the prime minister and the government. They were, from one point of view, the mirror image of Hamas’s murderous actions — seeking to identify the peace process with terrorism and to uproot the process; it was in this sense, presumably, that Rabin and others spoke of the “enemies of peace on both sides.” On December 7, as the army poured thousands of troops into the territories to hunt down the terrorists’ ringleaders and keep the Jewish and Arab populations separated, especially in the Hebron area, the road to that city from Jerusalem was closed while the huge funeral procession of Mordechai and Shalom Lapid made its way to the Jewish cemetery in Hebron. In parts of Bethlehem and Hebron, rocks and bricks were thrown at the mourners, and the latter, together with soldiers who were escorting them, fired into the air to deter the harassers.

The army (in the territories) and the police (inside Israel) continued to commit personnel to deal with settlers, who resorted to such tactics as blocking the main entrance road to Jerusalem. On December 12, dozens of settlers broke through an IDF barrier and clashed with soldiers at “Joseph’s Tomb” in Nablus after the army revoked a permit it had given them to bring a new Torah scroll into the yeshivah at the site and celebrate the event. Two soldiers were lightly injured in the fracas. On the 16th, the IDF arrested 35 settlers and supporters who evaded army roadblocks and reached Nablus, which together with all of central Samaria had been
declared a "closed military area," in a second attempt to bring in the Torah scroll. The ceremony was finally held on December 21, with the participation of about 2,000 settlers and guests, primarily from the Chabad movement.

"Hamas Day," December 14, on which the organization marked the sixth anniversary of its founding, passed without serious incident, thanks in part to heightened IDF preparedness. The Kassam Brigades struck again on December 22. This time the victims were two haredi Jews from Bnei Brak, the largely ultra-Orthodox city next to Tel Aviv, who were killed when their car was fired on from a passing car as they were driving to the settlement of Ofra. On December 24, the Islamic militants in the territories claimed their most senior IDF victim since the beginning of the intifada. Lt. Col. Meir Mintz, aged 36, from Re'ut, was killed when two gunmen ambushed his jeep in Gaza City.

The Christmas season brought little good will between Palestinians and Israelis in Bethlehem. In fact, a power struggle between the Civil Administration authorities and longtime mayor Elias Freij threatened for a time to disrupt the Christmas celebrations. Freij had refused to remove a Palestinian flag from atop City Hall and threatened to cancel the festivities altogether if the army intervened. On the night before the traditional Christmas parade by the Palestinian scout movement, the army removed all the flags around City Hall. However, on the 24th, as some scouts marched with Palestinian flags, youngsters ran up more flags on City Hall and across from the building. A potentially serious, and embarrassing, incident was averted when senior Israeli officers who were present ordered eager soldiers and police not to remove the flags. Some 20,000 tourists visited Bethlehem during the Christmas events, which passed quietly.

Other National Security Matters

LEBANON AND "OPERATION ACCOUNTABILITY"

The situation in southern Lebanon deteriorated sharply in 1993, as Hezballah and other radical Islamic and Palestinian organizations kept trying to dislodge the Israeli "security zone." Israel, in turn, continued its policy of "one for one" retaliation.

According to IDF statistics, the terrorist organizations in Lebanon mounted a total of 330 attacks in 1993, almost double the number in 1992. Most of the attacks were carried out by Hezballah. The Islamic fundamentalist organization seemed to have improved its arms supplies, as 196 of the attacks involved the use of antitank and Sagger shoulder-mounted missiles, a dramatic rise over the previous year. Concomitantly, attacks employing mines and roadside devices declined as a percentage of the total, although in absolute numbers they increased slightly. Twenty-six Israeli soldiers were killed in Lebanon in 1993 and 66 were wounded; 68 terrorists were killed. (None of the above figures include the seven-day "Operation Account-
ability"). Most of the Israeli deaths resulted from ambushes or roadside bombs; others occurred during direct combat.

The double-bind nature of the situation in southern Lebanon was reflected in an exchange of statements in early March. Israel, in a letter from UN ambassador Gad Ya’akobi to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, urged Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah and other terrorist groups. Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri explained to reporters why Beirut would not act: “The resistance began because of the [Israeli] occupation [of southern Lebanon] and is a result of it.”

On the night of April 21, nearly 50 Katyusha rockets landed in Galilee and in the security zone, partly in reaction to the announcement (April 20) by the Arab states and the PLO on the resumption of the peace talks with Israel. Three women were wounded in the attack, and some damage was caused. In retaliation, Israel artillery, which had already been beefed up along the border in anticipation, shelled Shi’ite villages north of the security zone. The cycle of attack and retaliation continued in May and June. On June 28, six people in Kiryat Shemona were wounded and considerable property damage was inflicted in the area by Katyusha rockets.

The situation escalated seriously in July. On July 5, an Israeli soldier was wounded in a firefight with Hezbollah gunmen; on July 9, two IDF corporals were killed and three soldiers were wounded, one seriously, in an ambush. On July 10 and 11, heavy fire was exchanged with Hezbollah. Three more Israeli soldiers were killed and five wounded, two of them seriously (one of them died two weeks later).

In a meeting with the U.S. coordinator of the peace talks, Dennis Ross, who was then in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Rabin said that Israel would not be able to tolerate the continuation of the situation in Lebanon. Rabin asked Ross to pass on this message to Syrian president Assad. The PFLP had its headquarters in Damascus, Rabin noted, and Hezbollah was able to make use of overland routes in Syrian-controlled territory to bring in weapons from Iran. Although Israel had shown restraint in responding to the attacks in and from Lebanon because of the peace process, Rabin said, “we shall do everything that is required to protect our citizens as though there were no peace talks.”

OPERATION ACCOUNTABILITY

By mid-July, Israel had moved substantial reinforcements into the security zone, including artillery pieces, armored personnel carriers, and tanks. On Friday, July 23, the inner cabinet (the ministerial committee on security) approved the first stage of Operation Accountability. The idea was to use massive firepower against an area north of the security zone, containing about 150 villages, in order to put pressure on Beirut to rein in Hezbollah. It was also important for Prime Minister Rabin to demonstrate that Hezbollah could not hold Kiryat Shemona and the entire Israeli north hostage with Katyusha rockets, just because peace talks were under way.

No ministers cast a dissenting vote on July 23, although the two Meretz representatives, Shulamit Aloni and Yair Tsaban, expressed some reservations. However,
they joined the two other Meretz ministers, Yossi Sarid and Amnon Rubinstein, in voting against the operation when it was brought to the full cabinet for approval on July 25. The Meretz ministers, and Sarid in particular, were fearful that the government would stumble into a second full-scale Lebanon war (the 1982 campaign, mounted by Menachem Begin's Likud government, had also begun with what was meant to be a limited operation but had dragged on for three years, claiming the lives of more than 600 Israeli soldiers).

Operation Accountability was the IDF's version of "Desert Storm," the code name for the U.S.-led attack on Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991, a mini-version of the "battlefield of the future" for which Chief of Staff Ehud Barak was preparing the IDF. It was a push-button, remote-control campaign fought with the use of computer-controlled, precision-guided munition (PGM) and over-the-horizon firepower unleashed in devastating quantities by land, air, and sea forces. The difference from Desert Storm — and given the trauma of the Lebanon War it was a crucial difference — was that no Israeli ground troops were sent in to "mop up" at the end. The virtual absence of Israeli casualties, the remoteness of the troops from their targets — many of them civilian targets — and a skillful media information campaign organized by the IDF Spokesman's department also worked to mute domestic political opposition.

Sending in ground troops would have served little purpose, since Hezbollah was a nearly invisible enemy, with a fighting core perhaps 700-strong. However, the homes and villages of Hezbollah activists were very visible, and it was against these that the IDF struck, sometimes targeting individual houses with pinpoint accuracy. The transition from stage to stage of the operation, planned in great detail, was dependent on the reaction of the other side. As it became clear that Hezbollah was undeterred, a large-scale evacuation of children from northern Galilee began. They would be joined, in the coming days, by tens of thousands of Israelis who fled the Katyushas that continued to rain down almost until the ceasefire came into effect. It was the second large-scale flight of Israelis from their homes in less than four years (after the exodus from the center of the country occasioned by Iraq's Scud missile attacks in the Gulf War). The operation brought economic activity to a halt in the north and was ruinous for the area's crucial summer tourist season.

On July 27, after giving the inhabitants of dozens of villages four hours to leave, the IDF began pounding the villages, and the navy blockaded the ports of Tyre and Sidon. These moves triggered, as they were meant to, a vast flight of Lebanese civilians to the north. Eventually, some 300,000 Lebanese were displaced, at least while the operation continued (and many found their homes razed when they returned). On July 28, the IDF announced that it would cease shelling the area north of the security zone to enable more residents to leave. Hezbollah took advantage of this to launch a series of rocket salvos into various areas of northern Israel. Television pictures showing huge convoys of Lebanese refugees and the devastation wrought in scores of villages were by now leading the international community to try to arrange a ceasefire. Speaking at a news conference on July 28, President
Clinton stated: "I think Hezballah should stop its attacks. I think Israel should stop the bombardments. I think Syria should go from showing restraint to being an active participant in stopping the fighting." Secretary of State Christopher, summoned home from a visit to the Far East, began intensive telephone diplomacy.

It was American mediation and pressure that finally brought about the cessation of hostilities at 6 P.M. on Saturday, July 31. Christopher and his senior aides were in constant contact with Jerusalem, Damascus, and Beirut, but Teheran, Hezballah’s patron, was also involved. Nothing was written, but in a press briefing one hour after the ceasefire came into effect, Prime Minister Rabin stated that the “understandings” committed Hezballah to desist from firing Katyusha rockets into Israel, while leaving the IDF and the SLA free to continue operating as before in the security zone. What Rabin did not say was that Hezballah, too, was free to continue its activities in southern Lebanon, while the IDF undertook not to attack villages (leaving Hezballah and others free to take cover there).

Political attacks were launched from the right-wing opposition over the high loss of life in Lebanon. Former Likud prime minister Yitzhak Shamir linked the developments to the peace process and called on Chief of Staff Barak to stop “blindly following those who are leading us to national disaster.” He was joined by MK Ariel Sharon (Likud), the architect of the 1982–85 Lebanon War, and the chief of staff of the Lebanon War, MK Rafael Eitan (Tsomet).

By early October, Hezballah had resumed its activity against the IDF in southern Lebanon as though it had not been called to account only three months earlier. Attacks against both the IDF and SLA continued throughout November and December, with predictable air force and artillery retaliation. Prime Minister Rabin toured southern Lebanon on December 28, meeting with officers and soldiers as some 20 Katyusha rockets landed in the security zone. Rabin cautioned Damascus and Beirut that failure on their part to uphold the terms of the ceasefire achieved after Operation Accountability in July “will make it very difficult in the future to conduct negotiations and reach agreements in other spheres as well.” Syrian pressure on Hezballah brought about a tense quiet in the region on the evening of the 28th, followed by scattered incidents the following day. A senior Israeli government source said that Syria did not want to heat up the northern border so close to the meeting between President Assad and U.S. President Clinton scheduled for January 16, 1994, in Geneva.

Others, though, had a different agenda. Three members of the Abu Mussa organization, which had broken away from Fatah, were killed on the night of December 29 after they succeeded in crossing the border into Israel. The entry was detected at once and a tracker picked up the infiltrators’ trail. In a five-minute firefight with reservist paratroopers, the gunmen, who according to a map found in their possession had been on the way to nearby Kibbutz Dan to perpetrate a mass attack, were killed. It was the first incident at or just inside the border fence in more than two years.
IRAQ AND IRAN

The Iraqi specter loomed briefly at the beginning of the year. On January 14, the day after planes of the U.S.-led coalition attacked military targets in Iraq, Prime Minister Rabin told the public that there was no need for concern. Speaking at an air force base, he revealed that Israel had been informed in advance of the attack and was continuing to receive intelligence information. The army spokesman said Israel was prepared for any eventuality. "Operation Thunder," in which all the gas masks that had been distributed before the 1991 Gulf War were being exchanged for new ones, continued at its previous pace, with the army's distribution centers reporting a brief rush in the aftermath of the air raid on Iraq.

Rabin, for his part, seemed more concerned about the threat posed by Iraq's neighbor, Iran, which he said, during the visit to the air base, had embarked on a program to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms, and in terms of time represented a "medium-range" threat to Israel. In a Knesset statement the following week, Rabin said that Iran would probably be able to manufacture nuclear weapons within a decade, unless the international community intervened, and named North Korea as the source of Iranian Scud-C missiles (the same type that Iraq had fired at Israel in 1991) and of advanced missile technology. Such threats had prompted Israel to join the American-sponsored "Global Protection System" against ballistic missiles, Rabin said.

OTHER SECURITY MATTERS

On February 28, the Arrow antimissile missile being developed jointly by Israel and the United States since 1989 (when the project was part of the administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, or "Star Wars" program) demonstrated its intercept capability. In a test off the Israeli coast, the Arrow successfully locked on and flew by — close enough for a kill, if that had been intended — a second missile. However, in two other launches, in August and October, when kills were the objective, the Arrow failed to destroy its target, although it locked on properly. The United States was committed to cover 72 percent of the $321 million of the project's second-stage costs, through 1994, having already underwritten 80 percent of the $128 million spent on the first stage.

A navy missile project fared better than the Arrow. In a test carried out on October 21, the Barak sea-to-sea missile being developed by the Israel Navy successfully intercepted a Gabriel missile fired from another ship.

The chief military prosecutor announced on September 13 that Maj. Gen. Amiran Levin and two other officers would be court-martialed for their role in the "Ze'elim B" training accident in November 1992, in which five members of an elite unit were killed when a rocket was accidently fired in their direction. Another general, Uri Saguy, the chief of military intelligence, was to be reprimanded. Overall, military accidents were down from previous years: 17 fatalities in 1993, compared to 37 in 1992.
In February, Prime Minister Rabin (who also served as defense minister) said he would review the case of a Tel Aviv University chemistry professor, Uzi Even, who told a Knesset gathering organized by Yael Dayan that he had been engaged in secret research as part of his reserve service for 15 years, but that when he revealed ten years earlier that he was a homosexual, he was dropped from his unit as a “security risk.” Efforts by civil-rights groups to eliminate discrimination on sexual grounds in the IDF — a subject that had been virtually taboo in Israel — got a boost on June 10, when the army announced that homosexuals, including civilians working for the IDF, could serve in high-security units. They were also assured of equal treatment during the induction process. Previously, homosexuals had been drafted but had experienced tacit discrimination and been barred from serving in certain sensitive units.

In November, former IDF chief of intelligence Aharon Yariv confirmed in an interview with Israel Television that in the aftermath of the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, the Mossad intelligence agency had hunted down and killed between 10 and 15 members of the Black September group, which had perpetrated the massacre. At the time, Yariv was the adviser on terrorism to Prime Minister Golda Meir.

The duration of women’s compulsory army service was officially reduced from two years to 21 months in November, at the recommendation of the IDF. A possible reduction in men’s army service was under study.

The High Court of Justice rejected two petitions submitted by Mordechai Vanunu, apparently relating to the conditions of his incarceration. Vanunu, a former technician at the Dimona nuclear facility, was sentenced in 1988 to an 18-year prison term for treason and espionage after he divulged information about the plant to a London paper. In prison he was kept in ultra-solitary confinement, even being made to take his exercise alone in the yard.

Several espionage cases that had been subject to blanket censorship and kept secret, in some instances for years, came to light, largely through press intervention. One such case was that of Prof. Marcus Klinberg, aged 65, who had been arrested and tried in secret in 1983, accused of passing information to the Soviets on Israel’s biological warfare capabilities, and had been in prison for ten years. On September 2, retired colonel Shimon Levinson, who had been a senior member of Israel’s intelligence community, was found guilty of spying for Soviet secret police and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Political Developments

In 1993 the volatility of the Shas (Sephardi Torah Guardians) party posed a far greater threat to coalition stability than the loud but lackluster opposition. (Prime
Minister Yitzhak Rabin depended on Shas to maintain his "Jewish majority" in the Knesset; the "Arab bloc" of 5 seats supported the government but was not in the coalition.

Founded a decade earlier as an unabashedly ethnic-communal party that appealed to the "Oriental" population, and the Moroccan community in particular, the ultra-Orthodox Shas party claimed that it was being victimized for its ethnic origins. The series of investigations and trials of leading lights in Shas for financial improprieties — "everybody does it, but we are the only ones who are accused," Shas politicians insisted — was, from this point of view, the latest attempt by the establishment to keep Shas in its place. At the beginning of March, the party, although claiming to be financially strapped, launched a daily paper, Yom Leyom, to help tell its side of the story to the faithful.

Two cases involving prominent figures in Shas rocked the coalition to its foundations. One case involved a deputy minister, Raphael Pinhasi, and the other a minister who was also the strong man in Shas and, some would claim, in the country, Interior Minister Arye Deri.

On January 31, Deri announced that he had decided, against his lawyers' advice, to waive the "right to silence" which he had been invoking for some three years, to answer police questions in the investigation against him on a variety of charges involving serious financial wrongdoing. (His parliamentary immunity was still in force.) Deri turned up at national police headquarters in Jerusalem on February 18 for the first of a grueling series of interrogation sessions. The course of events through much of this year in Rabin's coalition was in large measure determined by Deri's personal legal difficulties and shrewd political maneuvering.

On June 20, Arye Deri received a draft of the charge sheet against him from the attorney general. It included kickbacks, amounting to several hundred thousand dollars, which he had allegedly taken in return for using his influence to further projects undertaken by certain nonprofit organizations and to install an associate of his as the head of a local council, even though the appointee was unqualified for the post. Deri, who continued to maintain his innocence, was ordered by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Shas's spiritual mentor, not to resign from the cabinet. The formal indictment, a 61-page document submitted to the Knesset speaker on August 2 by Attorney General Yosef Harish, with a request that Deri's immunity be lifted, charged the interior minister with accepting bribes, committing fraud, abusing the public trust, falsifying corporate documents, and embezzlement. MK Haggai Merom (Labor), the chairman of the House Committee, announced that hearings on lifting Deri's parliamentary immunity would begin on September 26, two weeks before the end of the Knesset's summer recess. The delay would give Deri and his lawyer time to photocopy and study the enormous amount of evidence on which the indictment was based.

Deri dug in, with Rabin's backing, but others acted. On August 10, the Movement for the Quality of Government in Israel petitioned the High Court of Justice to order Deri's ouster from the cabinet. The court gave the government until August 25 to
While these events were unfolding, Attorney General Harish on March 1 asked the Knesset's House Committee to recommend to the plenum that the parliamentary immunity of deputy minister of religious affairs Raphael Pinhasi be removed. Harish wanted to put Pinhasi (and two other Shas officials) on trial for offenses allegedly committed in the 1988 election campaign. Pinhasi, who was then Shas treasurer, had allegedly employed yeshivah students — who were exempted from the army based on their declaration that they were attending yeshivah full-time and had no earnings — as campaign workers.

On March 17, the Knesset plenum voted to lift Pinhasi's immunity so that he could be formally charged. Pinhasi, however, petitioned the High Court of Justice, which on July 18, ruled that the vote was invalid, as the Knesset had voted without "a minimal factual basis." On July 29, the Knesset voted again (like the first time, in a secret ballot) on removing Pinhasi's immunity; in a stunning reversal, the vote was 54-50 against removal.

Acting on petitions submitted by groups and individuals seeking constitutional and Knesset reform, on August 20, the High Court of Justice ordered the government to show cause within ten days why Raphael Pinhasi should not be dismissed from his position as deputy minister for religious affairs. In the meantime, the police interrogations of Interior Minister Arye Deri ended. As it had so often in recent years, everything now depended on the decision of the High Court, which, sitting in identical panels of five justices (rather than the normal three, because the cases involved principle and precedent), heard the arguments regarding Deri's dismissal on August 30 and regarding Pinhasi's dismissal on September 2.

On September 8, the High Court handed down unanimous decisions in both cases. Neither Deri nor Pinhasi, they determined, should continue in office. The decisions were written by Supreme Court president Meir Shamgar and Justice Aharon Barak (who would become deputy president on November 25, following the retirement of Justice Menachem Elon). Essentially, the court found that, as Barak wrote, "The continuation in office of an official to whom the commission of grave acts is imputed . . . will undermine the citizen's respect for the government and the public's faith in the governing authorities." Shamgar also had some harsh words for Prime Minister Rabin for continuing to rely on his "political agreement" with Arye Deri and "seeking to justify it with legal arguments that contradicted the attorney general's binding legal opinion."

The court's decisions bore only a declarative status, but they were declarations that no prime minister could ignore. Rabin was spared the need to fire Deri and Pinhasi when the two resigned voluntarily, as did Shas's two other deputy ministers, Arye Gamliel (housing) and Moshe Maiya (education). All four submitted their letters of resignation at the first cabinet meeting following the court's decision, on September 12 (just before the vote on the Israel-PLO peace agreement.)

On October 12, the Knesset voted 65-9 (one abstention) to lift Deri's immunity. Most of the dissenters were from Shas and United Torah Judaism; Deri voted with
the majority. He was indicted the following day, October 13, in Jerusalem District Court. (The trial officially got under way on December 22, but only for one day. The court declared a recess until June 28, 1994, so that the defense could prepare adequately, with testimony to be heard two months after that.)

COALITION INSTABILITY

The coalition was repeatedly shaken from within by the unbridled animosity between Education and Culture Minister Shulamit Aloni (Meretz) and the ultra-Orthodox Shas party. On January 26, Aloni let fly with another of her periodic broadsides. Speaking to high-school students, she called the chief rabbis “popes,” said that kashrut observance was archaic in Israel, and described the site known as Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus as “the tomb of Sheikh Yusuf.” Shas demanded that the prime minister make good on the promise he had given to Rabbi Ovadia Yosef the previous November, during an earlier Shas-Aloni clash, “to take the necessary steps in accordance with [his] authority” if Aloni continued to offend religious sensibilities.

The shoe shifted to the other foot a few days later when reporters received, anonymously, a tape on which Rabbi Yosef could be heard declaring that “on the day of [Shulamit] Aloni’s death we shall proclaim a celebration and hold a banquet.” The head of the Shas Knesset caucus, MK Shlomo Benezri, said that the tape had been made at a Talmud lesson given by Rabbi Yosef two years earlier — before the formation of the Labor-led government. Benezri explained that Yosef “speaks differently to different groups.” If his audience consists of “simple people, he simplifies.”

Shas was reeling under pressures both external and internal. The party’s image was tarnished by the criminal investigations against some of its most senior figures. Many of its supporters were appalled at Shas’s coalition partnership with the “heretical” Meretz party and/or at its apparent support for a dovish stand on the territories. The settlers and other religious nationalists, trying to use Shas’s distress as a lever to force it out of the coalition and leave Rabin without a “Jewish majority,” accused the party of betraying “Eretz Yisrael,” the Land of Israel.

Shas fought back by a circuitous route. On May 5, a Wednesday, Interior Minister Deri told the prime minister that if he did not dismiss Education Minister Shulamit Aloni by the following Sunday, he would resign and Shas would leave the coalition. Since her January clash with Shas, Aloni seemed to some to have adopted provocation as a way of life, although others said she was merely being true to her principles. At Passover she was photographed in an Arab restaurant eating foods barred to Jews during the weeklong holiday; she took exception to Prime Minister Rabin’s recitation of the Shema prayer at the ceremony in Poland marking the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising; and she conducted negotiations relating to a teachers’ strike on Sabbath eve.

On May 30, to resolve the crisis, Meretz gave in regarding Aloni but kept the education portfolio in the party. There was some saving of face, since Aloni received
two portfolios: communications, and science and the arts, including responsibility for the Israel Broadcasting Authority. Amnon Rubinstein, the leader of the liberal Shinui component of Meretz, replaced her as minister of education and also — at Shas’s insistence — of culture. Meretz was further mollified as two of its ministers, Yossi Sarid and Yair Tsaban, were co-opted to key ministerial security committees. As for Shas, Arye Deri resumed his duties as interior minister, from which he had suspended himself, and the party scored points among its supporters by having brought about Aloni’s removal from the Ministry of Education. (All the portfolio changes came into effect formally a week later when they were endorsed by the Knesset by a vote of 59–37.)

Following Deri’s resignation under High Court pressure on September 12, Rabin added to his three portfolios (premier, defense, religious affairs) the important Interior Ministry, although Deri was said to be running it by “remote control.” In effect, Rabin now headed a minority government, since Shas could no longer be completely relied on and the two “Arab” or “far-left” parties (as the public perceived them) that gave the coalition its “blocking majority” of 61 seats had never formally been in the coalition. Still, in defiance of all the odds, the government was able to press ahead with its radical approach to the Palestinian question and to win approval for the agreement with the PLO.

Coalition instability escalated in late October when the state budget went to the Knesset plenum for its first reading. Since the budget vote was automatically a vote of confidence in the government, uncertainty about the outcome created an opening for interest groups within or affiliated with the coalition to pressure the government. Shas warned Labor that if the budgetary promises it had received before leaving the government were not fulfilled, its votes could not be counted on. Several Labor MKs, notably the lobbyists for the troubled Israel Aircraft Industries, also threatened to vote against the budget.

In the event, the vote on October 27 was 59–45 in favor (three abstentions); Shas and both “Arab” parties supported the coalition. In addition to having its financial demands met, Shas was further mollified when Prime Minister Rabin assured MK Arye Deri that the government would bring about the necessary legislative amendment to render null and void a decision by the Supreme Court (October 22) permitting nonkosher meat to be imported. However, this was not well received by Meretz. In a meeting with Rabin, Meretz ministers told the prime minister that their party could not accept, on either coalition or constitutional grounds, an attempt by Labor to evade the court’s ruling by amending the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. Shas spokesmen countered by declaring that it would never be part of a government that sanctioned bringing nonkosher meat into the country. On November 28, the cabinet voted 11–4 — all the dissenting votes were from Meretz — to press ahead with legislation that would effectively prevent the importation of nonkosher meat.

In the meantime, Rabin was not optimistic about the coalition’s prospects. It was true, he told a party forum on November 25, that the coalition could prevent any other party from forming a government and could even pass a peace agreement in
the Knesset. The problem was that with Shas on the sidelines, “effective government” was virtually impossible.

On December 7, the day after the murder of Mordechai and Shalom Lapid (see “National Security,” above), President Ezer Weizman, clearly influenced by the intensity of right-wing invective, called in the prime minister and leaders of other parties (separately). His message was that “national unity” must prevail if Israel were not to be torn apart by differences over the peace process. Weizman was criticized in some quarters for using his traditionally nonpartisan office to intervene in politics.

In the meantime, the coalition survived a constant barrage of opposition no-confidence motions, largely because the opposition was itself in some disarray. The year’s final no-confidence motions, submitted, as usual, by the Likud, Tsomet, and the NRP, were debated in a typically acrimonious and raucous Knesset session on December 27. The motions attacked the government for purportedly surrendering to PLO demands and making agreements that were detrimental to Israel’s security and conducive to more terrorism. Benjamin Netanyahu said that in the three months preceding the agreement with the PLO, 10 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks, but in the three months since the agreement was signed, 21 Israelis had died in such attacks. “That is your achievement in security,” he told the ministers, predicting a “national disaster.”

Foreign Minister Peres delivered a polemical reply, which was constantly interrupted by loud heckling and interjections from the opposition. He said that the Likud had no cause to attack the government since the autonomy plan, including a “strong Palestinian police force,” had been a Likud invention and was enshrined in the 1978 Camp David accords signed by the late Menachem Begin. “What do you propose, MK Netanyahu?” Peres asked. “What is your plan? Weren’t there terror victims when the Likud was in power?” Peres said that Israel did not want to be “the policeman of Gaza. Can we solve the refugee problem in the Gaza Strip? Don’t throw wool over the people’s eyes. You have no solution. You have words, but no substance.”

Peres’s speech was followed by a lengthy political debate in which none of the speakers had any new insights to offer, held before a largely empty chamber, until the MKs returned for the vote. The government coalition won easily, 55–45, with two abstentions (both from Shas).

LIKUD PARTY

The Likud got a new leader in 1993, but not before the eventual winner of the contest introduced a very un-Israeli note into the proceedings. On January 14, two months before the party was to hold primaries to elect its new leader, MK Benjamin Netanyahu, considered the frontrunner in the race, went on Israel TV’s “Mabat” news magazine to reveal to the nation that he had had an extramarital affair. Netanyahu said he was reacting to a threat made the previous night in an anony-
mous phone call to his wife, Sarah. The caller said he had a videotape showing Netanyahu “in a compromising situation” and would release it if he did not withdraw from the Likud leadership race. Netanyahu charged that the blackmail attempt was the work of a “senior member of the Likud who surrounds himself with criminals and does not represent the whole party.” Although Netanyahu named no names, his main opponent in the primaries, MK David Levy, understood that he was the target of the accusation and demanded that Netanyahu issue a retraction. Instead, Netanyahu filed a formal complaint with the police on January 17; two weeks later he told cheering supporters at his first campaign meeting since making his confession that he had been the victim of an “unprecedented political crime.”

On March 24, the Likud electorate handed Benjamin Netanyahu a sweeping victory. At age 46, Netanyahu became the youngest person ever to lead a major party in Israel, winning an absolute majority of the vote, 52 percent, twice as much as David Levy. Binyamin Begin garnered about 15 percent and Moshe Katzav 6.5 percent. Begin and Katzav congratulated Netanyahu and said they would work with him to restore party cohesion. David Levy refused to congratulate Netanyahu, though he dismissed speculation that he would leave the Likud. Netanyahu, for his part, urged all in the party to let bygones be bygones and focus on “saving the country.”

Netanyahu now concentrated on consolidating his power. At the Likud convention, which opened, symbolically, at Katzrin, on the Golan Heights, on May 16, before moving to Tel Aviv, he pushed through a constitution that effectively insured that he could not be challenged for the party leadership before the next Knesset elections. Netanyahu also restructured the party’s institutions to deprive the senior executives of significant power. The event itself was tightly programmed, and, in the image of the party’s new leader, the tone was bourgeois rather than populist, the polar opposite of the rowdy Herut conventions under Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. The only fireworks were produced when David Levy’s brother, Maxim, the mayor of Lod, walked out over a wrangle involving the election of the Central Committee chairman, a position he had sought. (In a revote in August, ordered by the Likud’s judicial tribunal, the Netanyahu camp’s fears were realized when Maxim Levy was elected Central Committee chairman.) David Levy himself boycotted the convention, and his other two rivals, Begin and Katzav, quickly fell into line, as did Ariel Sharon, who had generated much of the ruckus at conventions in past years.

On June 2, two weeks after the convention, the State Attorney’s Office announced that the investigation into Netanyahu’s allegations of blackmail and the tapping of his phone had been terminated. No evidence had been found to substantiate either complaint.

Amid the general euphoria that seized many Israelis following the signing of the Israel-PLO accord in September, the Likud found itself pushed into a corner. In an effort to respond to the agreement, yet without departing from its Greater Israel orientation, the party leadership convened the 3,500 members of the Central Com-
mittee on October 19 to consider three plans for the territories. David Levy continued to boycott such events, this time pleading a previously scheduled family occasion. In any event, he, in common with other senior Likud MKs, had previously declared his opposition to a new program that might make it appear that the party was abandoning its traditional position. The two main speakers, Netanyahu and Sharon, spoke about possible Israeli “cantons” in the territories, their core a large, urban-scale settlement.

The third speaker, MK Meir Shetreet, who said the agreement with the PLO was a fait accompli and the Likud should think in terms of damage control, drew jeers for his abstention in the Knesset vote on the accord. Shetreet focused his remarks on five “red lines” across which the government must not retreat, a list that had been proposed by various Likud spokespersons since the signing of the agreement: no Palestinian state, no return of Arab refugees, absolute Israeli sovereignty in unified Jerusalem, complete freedom of action for the security forces in the territories, and full protection for the Jewish settlements. At the conclusion of the meeting, the plans were referred to the party’s executive bureau, which was to work them into a detailed alternative plan.

**Weizman Elected President**

Ezer Weizman, aged 69, was installed as Israel’s seventh state president on May 13, succeeding Chaim Herzog, who stepped down after serving two consecutive five-year terms, the maximum allowed. In the Knesset’s vote on March 24, Weizman, Labor’s candidate, defeated the Likud’s MK Dov Shilansky by 66–53 (one abstention). Weizman’s election was assured after Shas announced its support for him in exchange for Labor’s backing for its candidate for Sephardic chief rabbi. Weizman, though, had decidedly not been Prime Minister Rabin’s first choice. In a first-time-ever runoff to choose the party’s candidate for president, Labor’s Central Committee in January picked Weizman over two other former MKs, the ultradevish Lova Eliav and the hawkish Shlomo Hillel.

Weizman, who was also considered a dove, like his uncle, Israel’s first president, Chaim Weizmann, was known to have the backing of Shimon Peres. A former air force commander, Weizman joined the Likud after his army service, was an architect of the peace with Egypt as defense minister in the Begin government, left to form his own party because of Begin’s hesitancy to expand the peace process, and then joined Labor. His relations with Rabin had been strained ever since he revealed that Rabin, then chief of staff, had suffered a brief nervous collapse on the eve of the 1967 Six Day War. The immensely popular Weizman, known for his chummy manner and big mouth, promised to take his new duties seriously and expressed the hope that he could make a contribution to the peace process. His first — and unsuccessful — presidential foray into politicking came in December, when he called for the formation of a national unity government to cope with rising terrorism.
Local Elections

The focus of interest in the 1993 municipal elections, which were held on November 2 (with runoffs two weeks later in cases where no mayoral candidate received 40 percent of the vote) was primarily the country's three largest cities.

In Jerusalem, the Labor party made every mistake possible. After having ruled the city for a generation, it lost it to the Likud. In a highly controversial and politically unwise move, Prime Minister Rabin persuaded longtime Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek (in office since 1965) to run again, despite the fact that the 83-year-old Kollek had originally conceded that he was "too old" to run for a seventh term. Rabin and the party machine induced Kollek to run again because they feared that Kollek's designated successor, deputy mayor Amos Mar-Haim, could not win against the Likud candidate, MK Ehud Olmert, an articulate former health minister some 30 years Kollek's junior.

After the signing of the Israel-PLO agreement, Rabin and the Labor party compounded their earlier mistakes by mixing national with local politics, declaring that the municipal elections, and in Jerusalem especially, would be viewed as a kind of referendum on the peace process. This tactic was particularly damaging in Jerusalem, a city whose distinctive religious and ethnic makeup consistently produced an ultranationalist majority. Kollek, a Laborite in every fiber of his being, had been able to put a seeming distance between himself and the party machine by running at the head of a supraparty list called "One Jerusalem." By artificially dragging in the national issue, Labor virtually invited everyone who was leery about the peace process, and there were many such in Jerusalem, to vote against Kollek.

The campaign itself was, as the Jerusalem Post wrote, "the dirtiest . . . in recent history." In the end, it was a combination of apathy and zeal that undid Kollek. Apathy by former Kollek supporters who could not bring themselves to vote for such an aged figure and by the city's 89,000 eligible Arab voters who virtually boycotted the election in order not to legitimize Israeli rule in East Jerusalem; and zeal by the haredi population, which voted in droves for Olmert after Rabbi Meir Porush, the candidate of United Torah Judaism, dropped out of the race on the night before the election in return for a string of promises that Olmert made but that Kollek declined to give.

Olmert won nearly 60 percent of the vote to Kollek's 35 percent. It was a painful end to the spectacular 30-year career of the man whose name had become virtually synonymous with Jerusalem. Teddy Kollek, who announced his resignation from the city council on November 29, at that body's first meeting after the elections — held in the new City Hall that was Kollek's last major project — will probably be remembered as the greatest builder of Jerusalem since Herod the Great.

Israel's other veteran mayor, Shlomo Lahat, who had presided with a strong hand over the fortunes of Tel Aviv for 19 years, did not make Kollek's mistake. A year before the 1993 elections, Lahat announced that he would not seek reelection, leaving the way open for Ronnie Milo, a young Likud MK who had begun his career
as something of an extremist but had since become a center-of-the-road politician, defying his party by abstaining in the Knesset vote on the Israel-PLO accord. Following the earlier Kollek model and indeed taking it farther, Milo put together an “independent” list on which a leading local Meretz figure occupied the number-two position. His major adversary was a popular war hero and newly elected Labor MK, Avigdor Kahalani, a leader of the campaign against ceding the Golan Heights (the site of his heroic feats in the Yom Kippur War) and a Yemenite to boot. Efforts by national leaders to turn the Tel Aviv vote into another referendum on the peace process were rebuffed strongly by Milo, who was particularly upset at the backing he received from Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, since the last thing he wanted, in a mirror image of Kollek’s problem, was to be identified with the Likud.

In Haifa, a reinvigorated Labor party, led by recently retired Major Gen. Amram Mitzna, easily defeated all opponents, with Mitzna winning nearly 60 percent of the vote. He had previously trounced the incumbent mayor, Arye Gurel, in a party primary. (A week after the election, the 75-year-old Gurel, a true product of the old-time party machine, was formally charged with fraud and criminal conspiracy.)

There were more nonpartisan candidates in 1993, as local issues became more dominant, and ten of them won their races. Overall, following runoff elections in Jewish localities where no candidate had received 40 percent of the votes, the Likud controlled 47 city halls and local councils (down from 56) to Labor’s 39; nonpartisan candidates won ten elections, haredim two, Tsomet and the National Religious party one each. If the results in the Arab localities were added in, Labor edged out the Likud overall. At any rate, after the results were in, Labor abandoned its contention that the local elections, and Jerusalem in particular, constituted a kind of referendum on the peace process.

Immigration

In 1993, 76,800 new immigrants arrived in Israel, the vast majority (66,000, or 86 percent) from the former Soviet Union. The figures — despite the fears generated by President Boris Yeltsin’s violent quelling of the attempted coup against his government in October — were almost a carbon copy of 1992. Since 1989, 477,000 immigrants had arrived from the former Soviet Union, representing 86 percent of the total aliyah (553,000, more than 10 percent of Israel’s population at the end of 1993) in that five-year period.

Without the Russians, immigration to Israel remained at its low levels of the mid-1980s. About 3,300 came from Europe, the majority (1,410) from France, and 2,750 from North America, including 2,100 from the United States. Immigration from South Africa nearly doubled, but here too the absolute numbers were very low: 215 in 1992 and 419 in 1993.

In February the cabinet approved the recommendations of an interministerial committee that had been considering the question of the Falas Mura, the name given to an estimated 30,000 or more Ethiopian Jews still in Ethiopia who had converted
to Christianity. The committee’s major recommendation was that individual members of the group should be permitted to immigrate to Israel on humanitarian grounds, for family reunification. The committee did not take up the vexed question of whether the Falas Mura were Jews, as defined by the Law of Return, and therefore determined that they should be allowed in under the Law of Entry, which does not entitle them to the rights of new immigrants and begs the question of their religious status. Activists of the Ethiopian community in Israel condemned the decision and declared that they would do everything in their power to bring all the Falas Mura to Israel. In the meantime, some 3,000 of the community had left their villages and were waiting in Addis Ababa in appalling conditions. The Ethiopian government, which had already said it would not permit a mass exodus but would consider permitting individuals to leave for humanitarian reasons, told the Israeli ambassador in Addis Ababa that it was studying the recommendations.

On August 9, the first 16 Falas Mura arrived in Israel. They were greeted at the airport by Immigrant Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban and other officials. Another 113 humanitarian cases had already been approved, and Tsaban announced that representatives from his ministry were in constant contact with the Ethiopian authorities to arrange for the immigration of more members of the community. Tsaban said the Falas Mura would receive the same rights as Jewish Ethiopians. By year’s end, 290 members of the community had arrived in Israel.

Tsaban announced at the beginning of April that some 2,000 heavily subsidized apartments, with long-term low-cost mortgages, would be available to Ethiopians already in Israel. He conceded that there were still 7,000 Ethiopian families with no permanent housing.

The Ethiopian community had some success in its struggle for recognition by the Orthodox religious establishment in Israel. Following demonstrations outside the Prime Minister’s Office in late April to demand parity with rabbis for the community’s spiritual leaders, or kessim, the authorities pledged to place 46 kessim on local religious councils.

By the end of 1993, some 44 percent of all the Russian newcomers had purchased apartments. A breakdown by years showed that home ownership was a function of length of time in the country: nearly 52 percent of those who had arrived in 1990 owned their own homes by the end of 1993, but only 30 percent of the 1992 arrivals. More than four-fifths of the Russian newcomers were employed, with an increase of nearly 50 percent over 1992 in the number of those aged 55-to-64 who had found jobs.

More than 12,000 recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union turned out on May 4 for a demonstration outside the Knesset building. The speakers, who included former Prisoners of Zion Natan Sharansky and Yosef Mendelevich, excoriated the government for its “indifference” to their absorption problems. The Labor government, Sharansky said, owed a “special debt” to the immigrants, suggesting that their votes had given Rabin his majority. On July 18, the Zionist Forum, an umbrella group for Russian immigrants, led a protest vigil at the government
precinct in Jerusalem. The protesters wanted permanent housing instead of the camps of mobile homes in which many of them were living. They also demanded greater efforts by the government in employment and improved services for the aged and the sick.

YEMEN

On July 14, the Military Censor permitted the media to publish the fact that about 280 Jews had been brought to Israel from Yemen since August 1992 by roundabout routes. An estimated 800 to 900 Jews still remained in Yemen. Their chances of leaving were thought to have been diminished by the publicity, which was generated by infighting between Ashkenazi and Sephardi haredi parties over who would control patronage relating to settling the newcomers in Israel. Haredi newspapers had been slinging mud at each other over the issue for months — though without naming the country involved — and finally Yated Ne’eman, the organ of Degel Hatorah, petitioned the High Court of Justice to remove the ban on publication. The paper claimed that the news was being blue-penciled for political reasons, specifically to let Shas have its way with the Yemenites. The censor, preferring not to go to court, gave the go-ahead before the court hearing could take place.

Yated Ne’eman and other Ashkenazi groups charged that the Yemenites were being deprived of their Jewishness and subjected to “forced assimilation” into the secular Israeli culture. What disturbed the Ashkenazi haredim was that Shas, as a member of the coalition, was given charge of the absorption centers in Rehovot and Ashkelon where the new immigrants were housed. Shas, through its paper, Yom Leyom, responded in kind to such attacks. Government officials and politicians were scathing in their criticism of the behind-the-scenes wrangling among ultra-Orthodox groups, which had forced the censor’s hand and had thereby endangered the future of the project.

The Economy

The Israel economy remained basically sound in 1993, although the 3.5-percent growth was considerably lower than the three preceding years, each of which registered growth of 6 to 7 percent.

Public-sector salary upgrading was one cause of resurgent inflation worries in 1993. The consumer price index climbed to 11.2 percent during the year, nearly 2 percent higher than in 1992, though still well below the 18–20 percent levels of 1986–91. The Bank of Israel and the government had set a target rate of 10 percent or below. Unemployment, though, fell, to stand at an overall average for the year of 10 percent of the working population, down from 11.2 percent in the previous year. One reason for this was the decline in immigration from the former Soviet Union and the increasing integration into the labor force of earlier arrivals. (Nevertheless, the unemployment rate of the Russian immigrants stood at 20 percent, twice
The rate of the general population but half the figure of 1990 and 1991.)

The GDP grew by about half its rate in 1992 (3.5 percent vs. 6.7 percent, with per capita growth down from 3 percent in 1992 to 0.8 percent in 1993), totaling 183.5 billion shekels, with per capita production standing at $12,000. The decline was due in part to the lesser skills of the Israelis who replaced Palestinians in agriculture and construction, and of the new immigrants who were hired more for their willingness to work cheaply than for their suitability. At the same time, overall private consumption in 1993 rose by a hefty 7.8 percent (5 percent on a per capita basis), matching the figures for the two previous years, not least because of rapid enrichment through the booming stock market.

Developments in the peace process, as well as the breakup of the Soviet Union, which enabled Israel to penetrate new markets, were beneficial for Israel's position in the global economy. Exports in 1993 totaled just under $23 billion (an increase of close to 13 percent), of which industrial exports accounted for $13.8 billion (including $3.4 billion in diamonds), services for nearly $8 billion, and exports to the territories for $1.2 billion. Imports of goods and services continued to rise, standing at about $31 billion, made up of $19.7 billion in goods, $9.2 billion in services, and $1.5 billion in direct security imports. A high balance of payments deficit, then, remained a constant of the Israeli economy.

Privatization of government companies continued at what the Bank of Israel, in its annual report, called an "unsatisfactory" pace. Nevertheless, the government took in nearly $1.5 billion from the sale of the shares of its companies to the public, an increase of more than 130 percent over 1992. Companies involved in major sales during the year included Industrial Buildings, Koor, Israel Chemicals, Bank Hapoalim, and Bank Leumi.

Tourism to Israel rose sharply in 1993, continuing to rebound from the downward trend caused by the events in the Persian Gulf in the second part of 1990 and the first months of 1991. The 1.95 million tourists who visited Israel in 1993 constituted an all-time record (up from 1.81 million in 1992 and 1.11 million in 1991). The majority arrived from Western Europe (52.7 percent), followed by North America (25.4 percent) — primarily the United States — and two areas from which a largely untapped potential could now be exploited thanks to geopolitical changes and the peace process: Asia (7.3 percent) and Eastern Europe (6.6 percent).

The 1993 state budget, totaling 103 billion shekels, brought some welcome tax revisions for Israelis, including the abolition of the travel tax.

The "improved geopolitical situation" was proving ruinous for what had long been the flagship of Israeli industry, the giant Israel Aircraft Industries. On January 31, the cabinet agreed to inject some $280 million into Israel's largest company after IAI accepted the government's conditions: paring down the workforce by 10 percent (about 1,500 lost jobs), an across-the-board salary cut of 7 percent, and various structural changes.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, bullish for some years, tapered off somewhat in 1993, but still offered solid, and in some cases, astronomical, returns on investments.
Warnings that the boursa was overheated, notably the statement by Bank of Israel governor Jacob Frenkel on February 8 that the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) was a "financial bubble," the perennial rumors that a capital gains tax would be introduced, and rumors of insider manipulations had only a temporary impact. Investors, speculators, and manipulators were heartened by Prime Minister Rabin's unusual statement, in June, that no capital gains tax would be imposed on the stock exchange while he held office. The Israel-PLO agreement, with its apparent promise of an imminent regionwide peace and vast new opportunities for Israeli industry and business, sent shares soaring at year's end.

On June 13, the cabinet approved the creation of a free-export area, to be known as the Free Export Processing Zone. The idea was to set up the zone in the Negev or Galilee and lure foreign investors by offering tax exemptions for 20 years, compulsory arbitration to resolve labor disputes quickly, and other incentives. Some 20,000 jobs would be created, primarily in high-tech industries.

The state budget for 1994, in the amount of 115.5 billion shekels (about $38 billion at the time) was approved by the cabinet on August 29. The vote was 13-4, with the dissenters, two ministers from Labor, Ora Namir and Shimon Shetreet, and two from Meretz, Yossi Sarid and Yair Tsaban, arguing, respectively, that too few funds were being allocated to improve the lot of the needy, stimulate the economy, improve the quality of the environment, and better the conditions to absorb new immigrants. Prime Minister Rabin said that a supplementary budget would probably be required to cover various costs involved in implementing the Israel-PLO agreement.

The country experienced continuing labor disputes, among them a major strike by public-school teachers (April 27-May 10), one by 3,500 nurses in 15 Kupat Holim Klalit hospitals (May 9-19), and strikes by 1,200 administrative and maintenance workers, nursing aides, and physiotherapists in government hospitals, as well as by social workers nationwide and drivers of city garbage trucks in Tel Aviv.

Chaos on a wide scale resulted when some 60,000 of the country's civil servants began a strike on July 7 that continued for two weeks. On October 21, Israel Aircraft Industries workers took drastic action to protest the government's streamlining plan being forced on the ailing giant corporation. Thousands shut down Ben-Gurion Airport for more than four hours by holding a demonstration on the tarmac, while others blocked nearby intersections, causing huge rush-hour traffic jams.

Some upbeat news on the labor front came on November 5 when the Histadrut and representatives of Palestinian trade unions signed an agreement on cooperation. The agreement was the result of contacts that had begun secretly some 18 months earlier in Europe, through the auspices of a German organization.

Fears that the government's privatization program would cost large numbers of jobs, combined with jockeying for position within the Labor party faction of the Histadrut, produced the year's largest strike on December 9. It was a 24-hour walkout by some 100,000 workers employed in 32 government corporations (the government issued back-to-work orders to essential staff at the Airports Authority,
the Postal Authority, and others to prevent chaos). The 4,500 academic staff members of Israel's universities held a two-day warning strike on December 21-22, followed a week later by another two-day walkout in what was meant to be the start of a strike of indefinite duration. However, they returned to work on December 29 following intervention by the Tel Aviv District Labor Court, which ordered the two sides to begin talks “in good faith” to resolve their differences.

**Religion**

On February 21, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, aged 56, was elected Ashkenazi chief rabbi, and Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, aged 52, Sephardi chief rabbi. The runup to the election was marred by allegations of improprieties — financial, sexual, and other — hurled at the two eventual winners and other candidates. (The 150-member electoral body comprises 80 rabbis and 70 political appointees, 25 of the latter being the mayors of the country's largest cities and towns. In 1993, for the first time, the electoral college included two women.) The big winner was Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual mentor of Shas, who supported both winners, while the National Religious party found itself without a chief rabbi of its backing for the first time in the history of the state. Labor party electors were said to have voted for Bakshi-Doron in a tradeoff for Shas's support for Labor's presidential candidate, Ezer Weizman.

The struggle of the Reform and Conservative streams of Judaism to secure equality with the Orthodox wing in Israel, continued to be fought in the courts. In February the Jerusalem District Court ruled that the Interior Ministry must register as Jewish a Dutch woman and her daughter who had been converted to Judaism in the rabbinical court of Amsterdam's Liberal Jewish community. The woman subsequently married an Israeli kibbutz member in a civil ceremony conducted in Holland, but back in Israel her “nationality” (le'om) — which for Israeli Jews reads “Jewish” (yehudi/ah) — was listed as “unspecified.”

Hopes within the Reform movement that its status would be improved under the new Labor-led government were dashed in March. It was, indeed, a member of the government’s liberal-ultrasecular party, Meretz, who bore the bad news to the international conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Jerusalem. Energy Minister Prof. Amnon Rubinstein told the meeting that any attempt by the government to recognize the Reform movement would destabilize the coalition. Meretz was in favor of equalizing the rights of rabbis in all three streams of Judaism, he said, but it was more important to hold the coalition together so that the peace process could be advanced.

In the conflict over the place of religion in the state, a possibly precedent-setting ruling was handed down on June 24 by the High Court of Justice. The judges ruled that movie theaters in Netanya were exempt from a city bylaw barring places of leisure from operating on the Sabbath. The court asserted that films are a form of culture, and the law permits educational and cultural events to take place on the Sabbath.
In August a committee chaired by former justice minister Haim Zadok, which had reviewed the status and function of the country's religious councils, recommended that religious councils should fund Conservative and Reform institutions and that representatives from those two streams of Judaism should be permitted to sit on religious councils. Another radical suggestion by the committee was to have a single chief rabbi in local townships, rather than the present system of both an Ashkenazi and a Sephardi rabbi. The committee also called for a restructuring of the system for granting kashrut certificates and urged that clear guidelines be laid down regarding the payments that burial societies could ask for their services.

Coalition politics made the implementation of these proposals unlikely at best. In the meantime, the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel adopted a more aggressive stance on marriage ceremonies. At a joint press conference in October, leaders of the two groups stated that they were launching a drive to encourage Israeli Jews who for various reasons did not want the Orthodox ceremony to turn to a Reform or Conservative rabbi. The speakers admitted that such marriages were not recognized in Israel and were usually preceded by a civil ceremony. The head of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, Rabbi Uri Regev, said that Israel was the only country in the civilized world where Jews do not have religious freedom.

One of the key items on the liberal-Jewish agenda was addressed by the cabinet on December 19 when it decided to set up a ministerial committee to find a suitable location for a secular cemetery. The matter had been dealt with for two years by the Religious Affairs Ministry after the two former chief rabbis gave their assent to a cemetery for families desiring a non-Orthodox burial. Such a site would also be welcomed by the many new-immigrant families from the former Soviet Union who encountered difficulties from the rabbinical establishment in burying deceased non-Jewish family members.

In what was purportedly the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken of the religious beliefs held by Jewish Israelis, the Guttman Institute of Applied Social Research found that some 80 percent described themselves as “observant,” ranging from “strictly observant” (14 percent) and “largely observant” (24 percent) to “somewhat observant” (40 percent). Wholly unobservant Jews comprise no more than 20 percent of Israel’s Jewish population, according to the survey. About 90 percent claimed to observe all or some of the kashrut (dietary) laws; nearly 70 percent said they ate only kosher food at home. Almost four of every five of the 2,400 people who were surveyed (in face-to-face interviews) said they always attended a Passover seder, while 71 percent said they fasted on Yom Kippur.

**Vital Statistics**

Israel's population at the end of 1993 stood at 5.33 million, of whom 81.5 percent (4.34 million) were Jews. The Jewish population increased by about 2.5 percent, the same as in 1992. Of the non-Jewish population, which continued to grow by some 4 percent a year and was rapidly approaching the one-million mark (989,000), 77
percent were Muslims, 14 percent Christians, and 9 percent Druze and others. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Arab population of the territories was over 1.8 million at year's end, with the majority in the West Bank and some 750,000 in the Gaza Strip. The same source put the number of Jews in the territories at 115,300.

Jerusalem remained the country's largest city, with 586,000 residents, including 162,000 non-Jews in the annexed eastern city. In the 1990s, in contrast to the previous decade, Jerusalem's growth rate lagged behind the rest of the country, owing to the fact that relatively few of the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union who poured into Israel in this period chose to settle in Jerusalem, where jobs are few and housing costs exorbitant.

Road violence continued to take a heavy toll. In 1993, 505 Israelis were killed in road accidents and 37,992 were injured. Of those who died, 106 were aged 19 or below, while the injured from that age group totaled 9,411.

Other Noteworthy Events

DEMJANJUK RELEASED

On July 29, the president and deputy president of the Supreme Court and three other justices unanimously overturned the conviction of John Demjanjuk as "Ivan the Terrible," an operator of the gas chambers at the Treblinka death camp in Poland. Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian national who had emigrated to the United States after World War II, was extradited to Israel in 1986. He was convicted and sentenced to death in April 1988 by the Jerusalem District Court and the verdict was appealed (the death penalty is automatically appealed in Israeli law). However, the appeal process dragged on owing to postponements in the start of the hearings, first because one of Demjanjuk's lawyers committed suicide, and his chief counsel, Yoram Sheftel, suffered a serious eye injury when a Holocaust survivor threw acid into his face, and later because of the submission of new evidence, obtained as the Soviet Union disintegrated and formerly classified archival documents became available. Indeed, it was such evidence that led to Demjanjuk's acquittal on the charges for which he had been tried.

Ironically, it was the prosecutor in the case, Michael Shaked, who discovered the documents in newly opened KGB archives. Although he was well aware of their significance, he apprised the defense team of their existence. The documents in question consisted of postwar testimony given to the KGB by 33 Wachmänner (SS auxiliary guards), every one of whom identified the vicious operator of the gas chambers as "Ivan Marchenko." The 33 depositions introduced an element of reasonable doubt and compelled the court to release Demjanjuk, even though the justices were convinced that he had in fact committed war crimes while serving at two other camps, Sobibor and Flossenbürg. However, because Demjanjuk had not
been given the opportunity to defend himself against those charges — he had been formally accused only in connection with Treblinka — he could not be convicted of them. Moreover, since seven years had passed since Demjanjuk’s extradition to Israel, it would be unreasonable to refer the case back to the District Court.

As Supreme Court president Shamgar concluded his two-hour reading of the decision, and Demjanjuk was taken from the courtroom back to the cell in Ramle prison that had been his home since 1986 — for his own safety — survivors who had been at Treblinka and had testified in the trial, beside themselves with grief, could not control their emotions and burst into tears. Demjanjuk’s son and son-in-law, who were in the court to hear the appeal verdict, had planned to travel with him to his home country, Ukraine, on the next available flight. However, seven more weeks were to pass before Demjanjuk was released from his isolation cell and was able to leave Israel.

As a result of a series of petitions to the High Court of Justice, first by Noam Federman, from the Kach organization, and then by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and eight Sobibor survivors — all requesting that Demjanjuk be tried for crimes he allegedly committed at Sobibor and elsewhere — the authorities kept Demjanjuk in custody until his case was decided anew. On August 11, the State Attorney’s Office informed the High Court that the attorney general had decided not to retry Demjanjuk, citing possible “double jeopardy,” the protracted and costly nature of such a trial without any certainty of arriving at a different verdict, and the question of whether the terms of Demjanjuk’s extradition by the United States allowed for a new trial, or a “continuation” of the original one. (The State Department was in contact with Israeli authorities on this issue.)

A week later, a panel of three justices accepted these arguments; however, the court agreed to hear more petitions. It was not until September 19 that Justice Theodore Orr, appointed by Shamgar to deal with all the petitions for a second hearing (Orr was the only Supreme Court judge who had not yet been involved in the case), announced that he had found no valid grounds for a second hearing. On September 22, Demjanjuk left Israel on an El Al flight to New York. What was almost certainly the last trial in Israel of a suspected Nazi war criminal had come to an end. Supreme Court president Shamgar had concluded his reading of the decision to acquit Demjanjuk because of a reasonable doubt with the words: “It is ended, but not completed. The complete truth is not the prerogative of the human judge.”

OTHER MATTERS

On January 16 it was announced that Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz was to be awarded the Israel Prize, the country’s highest honor, for his life’s work, this despite his radically outspoken opinions — particularly his bitter opposition to the occupation of the territories captured in 1967 — which the Israel Prize committee members found “unacceptable.” Following a public furor, including the cabinet’s condemna-
tion of the decision by a vote of 15–1, the 90-year-old Leibowitz announced that he would forgo the prize and be content with the recognition he had received from the minister of education and the committee.

A mid-January report by Israel’s national airline, El Al, accused Boeing, the maker of its 747 cargo plane that crashed in Amsterdam the previous October, killing some 70 people, of responsibility for the disaster. A faulty fuse pin had caused one of the engines to detach from the wing of the aircraft, El Al said.

On January 18, the Supreme Court rejected the appeal by Robert and Rochelle Manning against their extradition to the United States, where they were wanted on a murder charge dating back to 1980, involving their activity in the Jewish Defense League. The Mannings, an Orthodox couple, had moved to the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, next to Hebron, in the early 1980s. In their battle against extradition they had the support of activists among the settlers in the territories. At the beginning of March, Supreme Court president Meir Shamgar ordered another hearing in the case of Rochelle Manning, due to unclarity about the “double jeopardy” issue. Under Israeli law a person may not be tried twice on the same charge, but she had already been tried in the United States on the murder charge that was the basis of the U.S. request for extradition. Robert Manning was extradited on July 18; Rochelle Manning was still in an Israeli prison at year’s end, although the Supreme Court had ruled her extraditable on August 16. She appealed the ruling and the State Attorney’s Office asked the Supreme Court to delay its consideration of the case until its officials could insure that her religious needs would be met in an American prison, this in the wake of allegations that her husband (convicted of murder in October and awaiting sentencing) was being denied kosher food.

On February 16, 84 Bosnian Muslim refugees from the war in former Yugoslavia arrived in Israel. The government had decided to sponsor their stay in the country despite the protests of Israeli Arab leaders, who claimed that the act was less a humanitarian gesture than a ploy to divert world attention from the mass deportation of Hamas activists to Lebanon. After the two Arab towns that were supposed to have housed the refugees changed their minds, the 20 families and 10 unmarrieds were given accommodation at Kibbutz Beit Oren on Mount Carmel, near Haifa. In the meantime, in March Israel sent about 1,000 packages of army field rations to Yugoslavia, the second humanitarian shipment of its kind.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and other “green” groups in Israel won a major victory when the United States announced on February 18 that it was canceling its plans to build a huge regional Voice of America relay station in the Arava desert. The project had been approved by the government but vigorously opposed by the “greens” because of its probable adverse ecological impact, particularly on the vast numbers of migrating birds that overfly or rest in Israel. (Citing geographic and budgetary reasons, the administration said the station would be built in Kuwait.)

On March 30, the Biblical Archaeology Society and its president, Hershel Shanks, the editor of Biblical Archaeology Review, an American periodical, were ordered to
pay a scholar from Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba a fine of IS 100,000 for publishing his work without permission or credit. Jerusalem district court Dalia Dorner ruled that Prof. Elisha Qimron's reconstruction of part of a Dead Sea scroll, which Shanks et al. had included in a facsimile edition of scrolls, was protected by copyright law. Legal observers said the decision would have major repercussions for scholarly work on ancient texts. Shanks appealed the decision to the Supreme Court.

The Knesset on May 27 voted 78–17 (five abstentions) to give State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat a second five-year term in office.

Some 5,500 athletes from 57 countries took part in the 14th Maccabiah Games, which opened on July 5 with an Olympic-style pageant before 45,000 spectators at Ramat Gan Stadium. The eternal flame was lit by judoist Yael Arad, the first Israeli ever to win an Olympic medal. Israel had the largest contingent, with 800 participants and coaches, followed by the United States, with 650.

Plia Albeck, the controversial head of the Justice Ministry's civil cases division, was relieved of her duties on July 11 by Justice Minister David Libai. Albeck was removed for questioning the loyalty of MK Haim Oron (Meretz) in a legal opinion she had prepared regarding a bill Oron was drafting that would give Arab victims of terrorism equal rights with Jewish victims. A hero of the settlers in the territories — her legal expertise had enabled the authorities to take possession of large tracts of “state domain” land in the West Bank over the years — Albeck had issued previous opinions that seemed to show contempt for Arabs and had maligned journalists. Replying in the Knesset on July 14 to motions for the agenda to the effect that Albeck had been removed for political reasons, the justice minister pointed out that even former justice minister Dan Meridor, of the Likud, had reprimanded her on five occasions. Albeck, who had been in the civil service for 35 years, retired at the end of August.

On July 6, Jewish Agency executive chairman Simcha Dinitz sent a letter to the 400 members of the Jewish Agency’s General Assembly, then meeting in Jerusalem, in reaction to reports concerning an investigation by the police fraud unit into his alleged misuse of Agency credit cards to make personal purchases. Dinitz claimed that he was being tried by the press and reminded the Jewish Agency officials that he had “served Israel and the Jewish people for 35 years without blemish.” On August 13, the World Zionist Executive came out with a statement supporting Dinitz, who said he would resign only if he were convicted. Dinitz modified this position in a letter of August 31 addressed to the chairman of the Jewish Agency’s Board of Governors, Mendel Kaplan, stating that he would take a leave of absence if he were formally indicted.

On August 17, the new Tel Aviv central bus station, the world's largest, opened. The project, which includes a shopping mall, was completed more than two decades after construction originally began, with a very long break in the middle. The enclosed air-conditioned structure replaced the old outdoor bus station nearby, which over time had taken on the atmosphere of a sprawling, raucous Middle Eastern suk.

On October 1, Abie Nathan, the veteran peace activist who first made headlines
in 1966 when he flew to Egypt in a private plane, closed down the Voice of Peace radio station that he had operated for some 20 years from a ship just outside Israeli territorial waters. Nathan, who had served three prison terms for meeting with PLO leader Yasir Arafat and in June 1993 had gone to Libya in an unsuccessful effort to meet with that country’s ruler, Muammar Qaddafi, said he had accepted an offer made by Tel Aviv mayor Shlomo Lahat to install the ship in Tel Aviv as a “peace museum” instead of sinking it, as he had originally planned.

In early November, a long-festering problem began to be solved when the Knesset gave preliminary reading to a bill that would enable the residents of the two Upper Galilee villages of Ikrit and Baram to return and rebuild their homes. The inhabitants of the two villages were forced to leave in 1948, “temporarily” they were told, at the order of the Israeli army. They were never allowed to return, most of their land was seized by neighboring kibbutzim, and the villages assumed the status of a mythic symbol for the Israeli Arabs. The government tried to quash the bill, Justice Minister Libai explaining that a ministerial committee was going to deal with the question and consider the ramified legal problems involved. Two Arab members of the coalition, MKs Nawaf Massalha (Labor) and Walid Sadek (Meretz), ignored the government’s stand and voted for the bill, enabling it to pass, 11–9.

On November 4, Israel's first commercial television station began operating full-time. Three groups that had been awarded franchises in May each broadcast on different days of the week on a rotating basis. To judge by the first two months of broadcasting, the owners of the Channel 2 franchises had decided that what the Israeli public craved most was local talk shows.

On November 29, the daily Hadashot put out its final issue, much to the surprise even of its staff, who were not informed of the closure decision until after the paper went to bed. Hadashot was launched by the Schocken chain, publishers of the prestigious Ha'aretz and a number of local weeklies, in March 1984. A week later saw the final demise of the weekly Ha'Olam Hazeh. Founded 47 years earlier by Uri Avnery, it had been Israel's original muckraking publication and had been decades ahead of others in calling for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

In one of the most talked-about criminal cases in Israel in recent years, the Supreme Court on December 9 convicted four young men of raping a girl from Kibbutz Shomrat in 1988. (The accused were then about 17 years old and the girl 14.) The kibbutz had originally tried to hush up the affair. Seven defendants in the case had all been acquitted by the Haifa district court, and the state had appealed in four of the cases. In a 218-page verdict, Supreme Court president Shamgar tore to shreds the lower court's decision for being heavily biased toward the accused. The judges instructed the Haifa district court to set the punishments of the four, which could range up to 16 years. The defense claimed that the judges had been influenced by the wide press coverage of the case and public opinion. Women's-rights advocates hailed the judgment.

On December 12, three new justices were named to the Supreme Court. The best known was probably Yitzhak Zamir, aged 62, the former attorney general who was
forced to step down in 1986 because of his forthright position on what became the "Shin Bet affair" (AJYB 1988, p. 368ff.). Zamir afterward served as dean of the Hebrew University's Law Faculty and as president of the Press Council. The two other newcomers were both district court judges, Ya'akov Kedmi, aged 64, in Tel Aviv, and Tova Strasberg-Cohen, aged 60, in Haifa. This brought the number of full justices to 12, with two additional provisional appointments, Dalia Dorner and Zvi Tal, both of whom had sat on the bench in the Demjanjuk trial.

**Personalia**

Among Israeli personalities who died in 1993 were Shalom Cohen, former Knesset member, social activist, and longtime editor (with Uri Avnery) of the radical weekly *Ha'Olam Hazeh*, on January 1, aged 67; Yehezkel Streichman, a leading artist, Israel Prize laureate, and former president of the Artists and Painters Union, on January 12, aged 86; Sa'ad a-Din el-Alami, Jordan-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem for more than 30 years, on February 6, aged 82 (Jordan named Sheikh Suleiman Ja'abari, from Hebron, as his successor on February 18); Anwar Khatib, former governor of Jerusalem under Jordan, on February 7, aged 76; Chaim Pekeris, a founder of the Weizmann Institute of Science and an Israel Prize winner for physics, on February 24, aged 84; Uri Brenner, former deputy commander of the prestate Palmach shock troops and a founder of the Dead Sea Works, on March 24, aged 78; Reuben Hecht, founder of Dagon Israel Grain Silos Ltd. and an Israel Prize laureate for service to the state, on April 15, aged 84; Yisrael Pollak, founder of Polgat Textiles and winner of the Israel Prize for his contributions to the state, on May 6, aged 83; Wolfgang Lutz, the so-called champagne spy who penetrated the highest levels of the Egyptian establishment for the Mossad in the 1960s and furnished information that helped Israel plan its 1967 war strategy, on May 13 (in Munich), aged 73; David Benvenisti, historian, geographer, educator, archetypical Israeli nature hiker, and Israel Prize winner for his pioneering efforts in these realms, on May 16, aged 96; Ofira Navon, a former Miss Sabra (1956) and a child psychologist who, as the wife of state president Yitzhak Navon, devoted herself to children's causes and stirred the nation with her fight against leukemia, on August 22, aged 57; Sheikh Amin Tarif, the spiritual leader of Israel's Druze community since 1928 and an Israel Prize laureate (1990) for his life's work, on October 2, aged 95; Nathan Rotenstreich, leading philosopher, former vice-president of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and an Israel Prize laureate (1963) for two seminal books, on October 12, aged 79; and Ya'akov Shimshon Shapira, Israel's first attorney general (1948–1950) and minister of justice from 1965 to 1973, when he resigned over differences with Prime Minister Golda Meir stemming from his demand that Defense Minister Moshe Dayan accept ministerial responsibility for the debacle of the Yom Kippur War and resign, on November 14, aged 91.

Ralph Mandel
Israeli Culture

The cultural effects of the most important political event of 1992-1993, the signing of an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization, could not yet be measured by the end of the year. Nevertheless, a certain emotional-intellectual readiness, a mind-set that looked beyond hostility with the Arabs, an assumed normalcy, could already be discerned. To some extent this mood reflected weariness with the unceasing and harsh demands of the country’s defense situation. It was also related to the crisis in Zionist ideology that had been developing for the past two decades. In this “post-Zionist” period, Israelis began to feel free to criticize Zionism and the Jewish state and even its once-holy security arm, Tsahal, the Israel Defense Forces — assuming that they were now mature and strong enough to survive such criticism. Bolstering this new mentality was a debate raging in academic circles over the received history of the state and its ideological foundations. This debate, focused primarily in the disciplines of history and sociology, has been filtered through the media into public consciousness and the larger national forum. The post-Zionist trend is also evident in the visual arts, drama, and literature.

The Post-Zionism Debate

Books on revisionist history and sociology were published as early as 1988, notably Benny Morris’s The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949, which offers evidence that in 1948 the Arabs did not simply flee, as most history books have it, but rather, that many were expelled from their lands by the Jews. The debate over the validity of this and other hypotheses challenging classical Zionist history has intensified, becoming increasingly acrimonious and public.¹

One underlying issue in the debate is Israel as a Jewish state versus Israel as an Arab-Jewish state. Sociologist Uri Ram criticizes Israel’s founding sociologists, in particular Shmuel Eisenstadt, who, Ram claims, “perceived Israeli society as synonymous with Jewish society, thereby relegating non-Jews to the status of ‘outsiders’ who can be ignored as peripheral to the basic social process.” Ram believes that, rather than dealing with problems of “Arabs in Israel,” Israeli sociology should challenge the built-in Jewishness of Israel. He asserts that the identification of the early sociologists with the socialist-labor Establishment did not allow them to question the national agenda. Ram proposes an alternative view of Israel, not as a

¹In 1993 important articles on post-Zionist sociology and history appeared in the anthology Israeli Society: Critical Perspectives, edited by Uri Ram, and in the journal Theory and Criticism (vols. 3 and 4, Autumn and Winter, 1993).
monolithic entity but as a pluralistic grouping encompassing many communities, among them Arabs, Sephardim, and women.2

There is much in the approach of the "new historians" that echoes the sociologists. Benny Morris's seminal works argue that Israel was more responsible for creating and maintaining the Arab refugee problem than was heretofore admitted. But they are conventional historical works and do not question Israel's basic Jewishness. Ilan Pappe represents a more radical post-Zionist approach. In "The New History of the 1948 War"3 he objects to what he calls "the historiography of the victors," in which the historian accepts the "given" and does not challenge the course of events. Pappe and other scholars claim that there is no such thing as objectivity, that there are different "narratives" in history, and that one must simply acknowledge which narrative one is adopting. In the case of Israel, he claims, it is equally legitimate, or perhaps even more legitimate for moral reasons, to advocate the Palestinian narrative. In his view, Israel's nationalist aspirations did not allow it to recognize the opportunities for peace which the Arabs extended. These opportunities, it seems, might have allowed Jews to live in peace with the Arabs but would have prevented the emergence of a Jewish state.

Literature: Fiction

It is no exaggeration to say that Hebrew literature, and particularly fiction, played a significant role in the protracted consciousness-raising process that led to the recent peace accords. One way it contributed was by humanizing the enemy, enabling the Israeli to perceive the Palestinian in nondemonic terms, to sympathize with his plight and ultimately to negotiate with him.

Already in the 1950s, the losses from the War of Independence still fresh in the minds of the fledgling nation, S. Yizhar (the nom de plume of Yizhar Smilansky) wrote The Story of Hirbet Hizeh and The Prisoner, which set a tone of moral protest over the treatment of the Arab during the war. By showing the Arabs as possessing a primal connection with the land, he indirectly suggested that the Jew was an interloper. There were also innuendos relating to the Holocaust, but in this case it was the Arabs who suffered displacement. The attitudes expressed in his masterpiece, The Days of Ziklag — skepticism about heroism and war and questioning the group ideology — would influence the anti-establishment, critical approach to political developments taken by writers like A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz in the 1960s.

The new edition of Yehoshua's stories that appeared in 1993 (The Stories of A.B. Yehoshua) highlights the role his generation of writers, in particular, played in changing public sensibility. Instead of the comfortable oneness with the biblical land

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and its builders expressed by the 1948 generation of writers, Yehoshua’s early works were universal parables, shorn of all reference to Israel, whose nonheroic protagonists were ambivalent about the nationalist Jewish agenda. In one of the best known of these tales, “Facing the Forests” (1963), an alienated Israeli graduate student arrives at a Jewish National Fund forest to be a watchman in a fire lookout and becomes instead the silent collaborator of a mute Arab workman who eventually burns down the forest. Literary critic Mordechai Shalev has suggested that the identification with the Arab emerges not only out of a sense of justice but also from an Oedipal impulse to bury the “collective father,” who is himself willing to sacrifice the son for the nationalist god.

The demythologization of the fathers’ Zionism and the undermining of the heroic ethos became increasingly explicit in the ‘70s and ‘80s — in such works as Past Continuous by Yaakov Shabtai (1977), Meir Shalev’s Blue Mountain (1989), and Yehoshua Knaz’s Heart Murmur (1986). The late ‘80s and early ‘90s brought a crop of even more radical novels of social criticism, many of them devoted to debunking the army ethos. In The People, Food Fit for a King (1993), the most important book in this mode to appear in the last few years, Yitzhak Laor reveals, through extensive description and internal monologues, the bestiality and arbitrariness of the army machine, where men often prey on their underlings. At the same time, this long work testifies to the human need for beauty and comradeship. Laor’s criticism extends to the very foundation of the country, which he perceives as having been built on the ruins of Arab homes, and to the Labor movement and the intellectual establishment for supporting what he sees as a moral travesty.

Written from a less radical approach is Avraham Hefner’s Alleles, about a left-wing teacher who goes out to demonstrate in the occupied territories to prove that he is not just an armchair liberal. In the spirit of Laor, Amnon Navot, in his book Capturing Deserters, reveals the “lower depths” of army service into which young Israelis are cast. He describes the degradation of boys from poor drug-and-prostitute-infested neighborhoods, the dregs of society, drafted into the cruel military police. Eventually, some of these young men rebel against the army regime and are killed, while others are sent to mental hospitals.

The brutal and anarchistic world depicted by Laor and Navot has many sources: the intifada and the violence to which it exposed Israelis, as well as the increasing violence of Western life, particularly the irrational violence of films, which have strongly influenced young Israelis. Postmodernist literature, which has flourished in Israel, also has a predilection for senseless violence.

POSTMODERNIST LITERATURE

New postmodernist voices have emerged in the last few years, fusing many cultural strands, influences from outside Israel as well as within the country. One of the characteristics of postmodernism is the sense that the context has broken down. There is no foreground or background, no discernible motivation for actions
and events. The stories of Etgar Keret, rising young literary star who writes in this mode (Pipelines, 1992), often end in a sudden violent turn of events. Like many of the new wave of young Israeli writers, Keret has been influenced by the American short-story writer Raymond Carver. He has explained that, “in contrast to the violence that was once plated with ideology, there is today no justifying context for the violence. It just happens.”

Another young novelist who creates a sense of “things just happening” is Gadi Taub. In his first collection of stories, What Would Have Happened Had We Forgotten Dov? (1993), Taub depicts lonely, rudderless, Tel Avivians; they contrast dramatically both with the pioneering founders who were motivated by a sense of purpose and with the fast-track, goal-oriented Yuppies with whom the first Hebrew city is identified today. In flat, ordinary language, he describes ad nauseam their empty everyday lives—cutting up salad, or waiting for something to happen, particularly a sexual encounter. More often than not, it is an encounter missed or an infatuation that lingers on the periphery of everyday domestic responsibility that triggers a Joycean epiphany, illuminates the protagonist's past. Taub's disengaged characters resemble the existentialist protagonists in the early works of Yehoshua, Oz, and Appelfeld, but in contrast to his predecessors, Taub does not use his alienated heroes to symbolize larger national or universal issues.

Orly Castel-Bloom exemplifies postmodernism as it connects with feminism. The very name of her new collection of stories, Involuntary Stories (1993), reflects the random, surrealistic character of her work. Castel-Bloom has gone beyond the anger of feminist fiction to a cold, abstracted world where there is no longer a subjective feeling center. This is especially evident in her masterpiece, Dolly City (1992), a shocking depiction of motherhood. Dolly, who studied medicine in Katmandu, finds an abandoned child, takes him home and performs one operation after another on him, administering treatment after treatment. Literally mad with worry over the infinite dangers lurking in wait for her child, she transforms fears into self-fulfilling prophecies, ultimately wreaking havoc on the child. Arousing the reader's deepest existential anxieties, the author also plumbs nihilistic, sadistic depths, pushing the novel to the limits of outrage and madness. Although the language in Castel-Bloom, as in Keret, is ostensibly Tel Aviv street language—its frank tone echoing the tabloid newspapers—through skillful use of syntax and biblical innuendo the language has been transformed by these masters into a vital Hebrew.

WOMEN'S LITERATURE

Women's literature cut across all the various modes of literature discussed. The sensitive, personal story that has traditionally characterized women's fiction continued to be published, but it gained a new legitimacy. A good example of this in the period under discussion is Chana Bat-Shachar's collection of short (and not so short) stories, The Dancing Butterfly (1993). In the title story, Bat-Shachar applies her tremulous sensitivity to the circumstances of old age (evoking echoes of Yeho-
shua Knaz's 1991 novel Way to the Cats, about an old-age home, which may have opened a new direction in Israeli fiction). Apart from authentically describing the old people, their smells, physical handicaps, and fantasies, Bat-Shachar is ultimately struggling with the issue that dominates all her work: women desperately seeking new wellsprings of feeling, but too timid to reach out for them, to cause the butterfly in the picture on the wall to dance. In the background of Bat-Shachar's story, an authority-father figure casts his shadow upon the protagonist, preventing her from achieving emotional liberation. Savyon Liebrecht's collection of stories It's Greek to Me (1992) is more directly feminist, depicting sometimes unbearable suffering and abandonment of women at the hands of men. "Women's relationships with men," writes feminist critic Lilly Ratok, "are secondary. In Liebrecht's writing fathers, sons, husbands and lovers are usually responsible for women's sufferings . . . only bonds of communion with other women can give them the support they need to overcome trials and ordeals." Ratok also points out that "a recurrent theme in Liebrecht's work is women's identification with Arabs, which derives from their sense that they too are a minority in a field determined by the hegemony of men."

LIGHT FICTION

Apart from their contributions to serious literature, women have led the way in lighter genres like romance and detective novels, what some consider "trivial literature." Not burdened with the expectation of making profound national or ideological statements, they not only pioneered the detective story and romance in Hebrew literature but continued to produce them in droves, even as men joined the ranks. Amazingly, once the dam was open, Israeli fiction was flooded with detective stories, thrillers, and romances, with apparently everyone trying their hand at these literary forms, often looking over their shoulder at film possibilities. Although most of the works are not of high literary quality, the better ones are interesting as vehicles for social commentary, often irreverent in tone and anti-establishment in motive, revealing the underside of seemingly respectable society. This is the case in Two Snow Whites, by Irit Linur, who wrote the best-seller The Siren's Song, which was subsequently made into a movie. In Two Snow Whites, photographer Osnat Shitibul happens upon a murder mystery; in the course of solving it, she confronts a hip, decadent Israeli elite, where everyone knows everyone from high school and the army and the sordid sexual patterns begun then continue, even though today they are all successful professionals, married and with families. The Jewel by Shulamit Lapid also combines mystery and social commentary. Like Lapid's other works in this series, it features a Sephardic woman journalist, Lizi Badichi, who solves murders by outwitting establishment figures and exposing the corruption and snobbery of Israeli society. In this case, the murder takes place in a convalescent home, where her mother is recuperating from an accident. Badichi digs into the history of the residents and staff and discovers blackmail and an inheritance squabble, as well as a grudge that goes back to the early pioneering days.
One of the most interesting recent publishing developments has been the growing number of family stories and sagas by writers no longer embarrassed to write about their immigrant roots. They depict, through a child's eyes, parents, aunts, and uncles in their Diaspora life and in their painful transition to the Land of Israel.

Veteran writer Ruth Almog describes the difficulties of greenhorn Eastern European immigrants after World War II in her collection *Artistic Emendation* (1993). In the title story, Heftzibah, traumatized by her father's death, is ostracized by the girls in her ostensibly religious school for mending her sweater, which was ripped as a sign of mourning. "But," she insists, "it's an artistic emendation." This symbolizes the vision in all of Almog's stories. The pain of the past, of being a child of poor immigrants, is transformed and transcended by art, by bringing esthetic form and perspective to the memories.

Other writers of ethnic literature have done this too. The most popular novel of the last two years was *Victoria* (1993), by Iraqi-born Sami Michael, which is at least partly autobiographical. Its power lies in the portrayal of Michael's mother, a woman of exceptional grace, and her love for a charismatic, too often unfaithful, father. Michael, a realistic writer, draws a harsh picture of Jewish life in Iraq and the humiliating transition to Israel in a truly gripping work.

Eli Amir's *Farewell, Baghdad* (1992) is another novel about Iraqi Jewish life. Amir, whose earlier *Scapegoat* is an angry novel about the shame experienced by proud Iraqi Jews when they came on *aliyah* after 1948, goes back to draw the large canvas of Jewish life in Iraq, with its various types of Jews — Zionists and Communists, businessmen and intellectuals — and the forces that brought them to Israel. A work of a very different kind by an Iraqi-born writer is *Autumn Signs* (1992) by Shimon Balas, which consists of three novellas about older intellectuals looking back upon their lives. Balas portrays a different kind of Iraqi Jew, worldly and educated, torn between East and West.

Another work of ethnic character is *Mishael*, by Don Benaya Seri, which takes place, not in a distant country, but in the Jerusalem neighborhood of the "Bucharim" where Seri grew up during the Mandate period. But, as Seri describes the colorful inhabitants with their exotic food obsessions and superstitions, it could well be a different country. In this work that borders on magical realism, he gives us the story of Mishael, whose barren wife has died and who is sought by the matchmakers of the neighborhood, but who himself becomes pregnant. He gives birth — to death, for the child and himself, which is, in a sense, Seri's ultimate commentary on the ethnic neighborhood of his youth.

While it is important that a critical mass of Sephardic writers has emerged, they do not yet represent the young writers who grew up in poor immigrant neighborhoods, whose voice has been conspicuously absent from Israeli literature. Rather, they represent older writers, particularly the Iraqi realistic school, who are products of the Diaspora. They have been writing for a while but have just now come into their own, as symbolic writing is waning and realism becoming more acceptable.
VETERAN ISRAELI WRITERS

The concern with memory is not limited to Israeli writers raised in the Diaspora. A major literary development of the years 1992 and 1993 was the comeback of one of Israel's most important sabra writers, S. Yizhar. After more than three decades of self-imposed silence, he returned to writing fiction with two autobiographical novels: *Mikdamot* (Foretellings; 1992), about his childhood, and *Tsalhavim* (Shimmering Light; 1993), about his adolescence. Yizhar's lyric stream-of-consciousness mode envelops the reader in the smells and sights of the pioneering era. In *Mikdamot* he describes his father working the land during the day and writing late into the night, then the family's move to Jaffa and the 1921 Arab riots in which the much-revered writer Yosef Chaim Brenner was killed. In a discussion of *Mikdamot*, professor of Hebrew literature Dan Meron speaks of the "Ecclesiastian" quality of Yizhar's memoir, which makes palpable the evanescence of life and of the pioneering venture, the sense that nothing is lasting. Translator and critic Jeffrey Green has described *Tsalhavim* as "the least self-centered autobiography ever written...the memoir is more about loss of identity or fusion with landscape and history than about the individuation and self-discovery one expects in an autobiography."

Aharon Megged is another Palmach-generation writer, but one who never stopped writing. He too, in his way, laments the Eden that has been lost. In his novel *Anat's Day of Illumination* (1992) he satirizes Tel Aviv's actual *nouveaux riches* and the literary *nouveaux riches* of the women's writing workshops.

Aharon Appelfeld, another of Israel's important veteran writers, continues to focus on the fate of the Jews of central Europe, spiritual as well as physical. In recent novels, Appelfeld has brought to the forefront figures from the panorama of characters in his many works who were heretofore held in the background. In *Katerina* (1992) he develops the figure of the Christian servant girl who worked for Jews and herself became immersed in Judaism and suffered as a consequence. In *The Abyss* (1992) he looks at the figure of the Jewish convert to Christianity who has appeared peripherally in many of his other works. The events of the novel, taking place earlier in the 20th century, are harbingers of the oncoming Holocaust, when conversion would be of no use to those born of Jewish parentage, and all the victims could do was die with dignity, not denying who they were.

*Literature: Poetry*

Hoping to give a shot in the arm to waning poetry readership, three poetry book clubs, offering annual subscriptions to a selection of poetry books, were established in collaboration with the literary journals *Akhshav* and *Siman Kriah*, as well as *Helicon*. The *Helicon Poetry Quarterly*, begun in 1991, has itself attempted to make poetry more marketable by devoting each issue to a different topic, such as "Love," "Mortality," "Place," "God," and "Family." The prestigious poetry magazine *Hadarim*, founded by Hilit Yeshurun in 1981, continued to come out once a year.
Ariel Hirshfeld, Hebrew University professor of Hebrew literature, has pointed out that, because of the new pluralism of Israeli society, there is no important figure or dominant school of poetry that can express the feelings of the whole nation. Israeli poets today "are all solitary practitioners," said Hirshfeld. "They have turned inward, are obsessed with language," said Hilit Yeshurun. "They've lost their human face, . . . but I see this as a period of hibernation. There have to be quiet times."

Although there were no dominant voices, many fine books of poetry were published in 1992 and 1993. Hirshfeld argued that Israel was witnessing the "return of the divine" to Hebrew poetry. He was referring to the many young religious poets — Admiel Kosman, Yonadav Kaplun, Ruth Blumert, Esther Ettinger — whose works are suffused with references to Jewish sources. Hirshfeld sees Kosman and Kaplun, for example, grappling with "the pivotal spiritual tensions of Hebrew culture between 'beauty' and 'faith' that characterized early Hebrew poets like H.N. Bialik." "At the same time," said Hilit Yeshurun, "they are sophisticated, modernist poets. They have to be careful not simply to rely on the rich biblical material at their fingertips, but to make the poem work in its own right."

The recently deceased Tet Carmi, whose profound knowledge of the history of Hebrew poetry permeated his poems, dealt with the problem of being weighted down by ancient literary reference; but his last poems, Truth and Obligation (1993), which fuse classical rhythms with human experience and wisdom, are nothing less than moving.

The poetry of Hezy Leskly has an abstract, postmodernist quality about it, a distancing from the confessional "I" and joy in the esthetic dance of words, combining unlike things in an absurd, surrealistic world, as the strange title of his book, The Mice and Leah Goldberg (1992) testifies. Leskly, who was also a dance critic and journalist, was seen as one of the bright new hopes of Hebrew poetry until his death from AIDS in the spring of 1994. His homosexuality appears obliquely in his poetry, part of an androgynous esthetic vision in which man is not born of woman but gives birth to himself, as the word becomes body. The fear of imminent death subsequently broke through the detached, mathematical structures of his poetry, and, as Nissim Calderon pointed out, "the poem is no longer a field of words, but a field of fear." Leskly's poem "Yitzhak" depicts the sacrifice of Isaac as the death of a homosexual from AIDS.

In the last few years Israel has witnessed the emergence of a group of homosexual poets. Their greater visibility can be attributed to the emergence of a social movement encouraging "gay pride" and "coming out of the closet." Literary journals devoted issues to homosexual literature, and the journal Not in a Natural Way was established to publish homosexual poetry.

Women's poetry continued to be nurtured by the tempestuous spirit of Yona Wallach, who died of cancer in 1985 at the age of 41. A book of her poems, The Unconscious Opens Up Like a Fan, published posthumously in 1992, expanded her influence. Possessed by sexual demons, theatrical, iconoclastic, Wallach expressed
great ambivalence about her sexual identity, calling herself Yonatan, fusing masculine and feminine forms. She also juxtaposed the sacred with the erotic. (Some critics feel that feminists who are lesser poets than Wallach have taken her graphic descriptions of the woman's body to an extreme.) One of Israel's important women poets, Maya Bejarano, has in the past grappled with the image of Yona Wallach and the issue of poetry as madness. In her latest work, *The Chants of Job* (1992), she confronts evil in the world, the modern equivalents of Job's pain and suffering.

**Theater**

A decline of 23 percent in theater attendance between 1992 and 1993 led to a concerted effort to produce more plays and to provide greater variety. This was accomplished largely by producing revivals of old plays, "sure bets," since no new wellspring of playwright talent emerged to satisfy the need for new material. The decline in attendance and the desire for greater variety on stage might be traced to the sharp competition with TV that developed, particularly as newly available cable TV brought the whole world into the Israeli living room. Habima National Theater suffered severe financial and managerial problems. Haifa Theater, which in the seventies was a focus of vitality, producing socially aware, political theater, never regained its former verve. The Cameri Theater, on the other hand, proved to be the most vital of Israeli theaters in the period under discussion.

Israelis continued to have a pronounced preference for Israeli plays that relate to the issues of their lives, rather than to foreign works. In 1993, almost half of all dramatic works produced were written in Israel. Israeli plays ran twice as long as outside productions; 65 percent of these were dramas, 21 percent comedies. American musical comedy revivals, such as *Evita* and *Guys and Dolls*, did not do well.

Drama critic Shosh Avigail pointed out that, while Israelis wearied of ideological theater in the eighties, seeking an "illusion of normalcy" with drama portraying love and family relations, it became apparent as the nineties progressed that the public could not so easily shed its collective concerns. Political drama was still the most authentic Israeli expression, but a new synthesis emerged. Collective issues were the focus, but they were presented from a more personal, less polemical point of view, more skillfully woven into the lives of individuals and their personal dilemmas. The theater "is again being called upon to be the lightning rod of the society," said culture editor Calev Ben-David, noting that Israelis did not need the theater for light entertainment, which they could find on television.

The most successful plays of this period dealt with critiques of the army and Zionism, the Holocaust, and the religious-secular Kulturkampf. Drama about feminist concerns began to appear, and the ethnic issue was highlighted in a popular work by Shmuel Hasafri, *The King*. This musical drama about the struggle of Zohar Argov, a Sephardic singer, to break out of the ethnic ghetto and be recognized as a national singer, and the price he paid in drug addiction, points up the use of a controversial and fascinating figure to symbolize a national issue.
MILITARY AND HISTORICAL DRAMA

Among the plays demythologizing the army and the political establishment, Gorodish, the story of Gen. Shmuel Goren, who headed the Southern Command before the Yom Kippur War, aroused the greatest public interest. This is undoubtedly because the question of who was responsible for the fatal negligence and errors of judgment that brought about the Yom Kippur War is still being debated by Israelis. The power of the drama, though, lies in the colorful, larger-than-life personality of the figure portrayed. An outsider in the military establishment because of his religious roots and Yiddish-speaking background, Gorodish became a hero in the Six Day War. A strongly militaristic and macho form of hubris brought about his tragic downfall and pitiful end — sick and isolated in Africa, where he fled the shame of being accused of negligence by the Agranat Commission investigating the Yom Kippur War. He died in bitterness, believing that he had been wronged, while the political establishment was freed from blame by the commission. Aside from exposing the arrogance of the man and the country in this period, the play points up the indifference of the army to the individual, to the ordinary soldier.

Another debunking attempt is The Entebbe Campaign, by Etgar Keret, which attempts to show that Yoni Netanyahu, brother of Likud head Benjamin Netanyahu, around whom a heroic myth was cultivated, was not as sterling a character as believed. The work received first prize at the Acre Alternative Theater Festival in 1993. A more damning vision of the army ethos is Hillel Mittelpunkt's Brothers in Arms, which is about army veterans who become arms dealers in South America. The old values — commitment to the welfare of the group, defense of the Jewish people — are gone. All that remain are the military forms and know-how, to be used for personal profit.

Notwithstanding the iconoclastic tone of much Israeli drama, the fascination with charismatic figures brought to the stage two plays about Zionist heroes. Yair, by Dani Horowitz, is a semidocumentary about Yair Stern, the head of the prestate terrorist Stern Gang. The King of the Jews, by Dvorah Omer, is a musical for young people about Theodor Herzl.

RELIGIOUS-SECULAR KULTURKAMPF

The ultra-Orthodox haredi community is an object of both curiosity and criticism in Israel, on stage as well as off. Two recent plays about the religious, both produced by the Cameri Theater, have been very popular. Fleisher is the story of a couple that has run a butcher shop for decades in a neighborhood where many early leaders of the state lived. But the neighborhood is becoming increasingly haredi, and the butcher shop, which had been a social center for all the old cronies, is losing its customers. Although the owners apply for a kashrut certificate, they are ostracized by the haredim; as a result, they are slowly being impoverished to the point where they can no longer support their retarded son in an institution. The author, Yigal
Even-Or, has weighted this melodrama against the haredim. They are shown to have no pity for the storekeepers, who are Holocaust survivors.

A more internal, balanced approach to the ultra-Orthodox is Sheindele, by Amnon Levy and Rami Danon, a play about a power struggle in the fictitious Stashov Hassidic dynasty, echoing actual intrigues that have happened within the Hassidic community. Sheindele, the daughter of the group's late rebbe, is married but has failed to have a child. Moreover, she was forbidden by her father to leave the Land of Israel to consult specialists abroad. When her husband is called to America at his father's death, she remains behind. The incumbent Stashov rebbe, who wants his own second son to inherit the Stashov dynasty, manipulates a divorce between Sheindele and her husband in America. The play revolves around the battle that ensues between Feige, Sheindele's strong-willed mother, and the cunning rabbi. Ultimately, Sheindele goes mad. Although the story embodies criticism of the ultra-Orthodox approach to marriage and divorce, in which men have the upper hand and women can, under certain circumstances, be divorced against their will, its power is in the character portrayals of the strong-willed combatants, the rebbetzin and rabbi. The Orthodox woman, in particular, is shown in all her strength, countering the stereotype of the woman in these circles as a victim.

FEMINIST DRAMA

Although Sheindele raises the feminist cry against religious divorce in Israel, it is Games in the Backyard by Edna Mazya, that goes to the heart of injustice to women in Israeli macho society. Mazya's play is based on the true story of a gang rape of a 14-year-old girl in a kibbutz. When the boys were brought to trial, the judge declined to punish them; however, the case was brought to the Supreme Court, and he was overruled. Mazya has gone beyond a psychodrama to create a work that stands on its own worth. Dvori, the protagonist, ostensibly a young flirt, is at heart a confused, insecure teenager who desperately seeks to be accepted and does not realize what she is getting herself into. The leader of the group, who eggs them on, seeks not sex but power. By having the actors play dual roles — the boys and their defense attorneys are the same actors — with the older men echoing the macho bonding and telling dirty jokes like the boys themselves, Mazya has broadened her indictment of the boys to include the sexual attitudes of the whole society.

Naomi, a one-woman show that won first prize at the 1992 Acre Festival of Alternative Theater, is the story of the trials and travails of a Bedouin woman in a patriarchal society, where a woman can be killed for dishonoring her family.

HANOCH LEVIN

From the larger perspective of Israeli drama, the most exciting artistic development was the turn taken by playwright Hanoch Levin, called by literary historian Gershon Shaked "the most original theater voice that arose in Israel during the
sixties and seventies.” His early works of absurd, grotesque drama, written in poetic language, reflecting a misogynous vision of humanity, with images of abhorrent creatures wallowing in bodily functions and humiliating each other, often alienated his audience. In his 1993 play *The Child Dreams*, Levin again depicts the cruelty and arbitrariness in human relationships, but he also depicts warmth and love in a family.

The play revolves around a happy family torn apart by war. The father is killed; the mother and child are allowed to escape, but in order to keep her child she must surrender her body to the captain of a ship. The boy eventually dies and is placed in an open field on a pile of dead bodies of children who are awaiting the Messiah. But the Messiah turns out to be a swindler, and in the end he too is killed. The work suggests the Holocaust, but it is applicable to any refugee or war situation. The obscene sexual innuendos, the pain and grotesquerie of the dead children, the low-life Messiah, and other elements remind the viewer of Levin’s older works. But withal he depicts true love, altruistic family relations, and the child’s vision of a beautiful world. This is a true departure for Levin.

GESHER THEATER

Gesher Theater was founded by Russian-Jewish producer Maltslev Slava and director Yevgeny Arye in January 1991, during the Gulf War. They began rehearsals with gas masks muffling their words. Although they originally performed in Russian, with simultaneous translation into Hebrew, they soon realized that if they were to become a legitimate theater option they must perform in Hebrew. With great discipline, many of the actors learned their scripts in Hebrew before they could speak the language. Drama critic Tzippy Shochet has called it a theater that revolves around a great director, for Arye is considered to have the stature of Peter Brook and Ariane Menushkin. After a few difficult years of living on a shoestring, Gesher won much deserved recognition and government support. The theater group itself renovated the old Nachmani Theater in Tel Aviv for its productions.

It was only natural that Gesher would bring its Russian concerns and sensibility to Israel. Its first 1991 production, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, by English playwright Tom Stoppard, showed ordinary men embroiled in a repressive government’s schemes and evoked memories of the KGB and Russian oppression. Gesher’s 1992 performance of Bulgakov’s *Cabal of Hypocrites*, about Molière’s uneasy relationship with Louis XIV, expressed the condition of the Russian artist under Stalin. Gesher’s 1993 production of Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, though, provided the deepest sense of Russian culture; its Christian imagery and complex, passionate confrontation with the issues of good and evil provided a spiritual experience, albeit a Russian Orthodox one.

Despite his immersion in Russian culture, it has been very important for Arye to investigate his Jewish roots. He does this in one of his earlier productions, *The Dreyfus File*, by French-Jewish director Jean Claude Gromberg, in which a group
of actors in the shtetl, acting out "the Dreyfus trial," themselves become objects of a pogrom. The last play of the Gesher repertory to be staged in the period under discussion was *Adam Resurrected*, based on the 1968 novel by Yoram Kaniuk. It depicts Adam Stein, a circus proprietor and a clown, who is adopted by the SS commander of a concentration camp to be his mascot, a dog-clown, playing the violin and joking as people are sent to the gas chambers. He accompanies his own wife to her death with his violin. After the war he comes to Israel, where he goes mad upon discovering that his daughter has also died. He is incarcerated in a mental hospital, where all sense of time and identity is lost, and the concentration camp, the madhouse, and the circus are fused together to create a surrealistic world. The production takes place in a circus tent.

**Dance**

Modern dance in Israel has been increasingly centered around individual choreographers who impose their distinctive character on their dance companies. This trend began in the mid-1980s, as opportunities increased for Israelis to choreograph their own solo dance performances, and groups formed around certain creative talents. The creation of the Suzanne Delal Center in Tel Aviv in 1990 strengthened the trend by affording young choreographers opportunities to show their works in a professional setting. The important *Gvanim Bemchol* (Shades in Dance) festival, which takes place annually at Suzanne Delal, has much encouraged young dance talent. Israeli dance has also been influenced in the last four years by the waves of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The Bat Dor Dance Company absorbed 8 Russians, and the Israel Ballet had taken in 11 new immigrants.

Ohad Naharin, head of the Batsheva Dance Company, is the focus of choreographer-centered dance in Israel. His style is influenced by the young, aggressive, international pop and rock culture. "There is an anti-aestheticism," wrote music critic Giora Manor, "that prefers the castoff look, ragged clothes looking as if they came from a second-hand clothing store...heavy working shoes, albeit fitted to the foot...and a visage of choppy or shaved heads that remind one of the skulls of prisoners or patients from the closed wards of psychiatric hospitals. There is an ostensible beauty in ugliness." This is also evident in Naharin's choice of dancers, who do not have exceptionally beautiful bodies or Hollywood-type star personalities, but are of various proportions, heavier and taller and more "human" than the traditional dance ideal. The imposition of the Naharin stamp on the Batsheva Company met with opposition from many of the veteran dancers, who ultimately left the company. One of the new ballets choreographed by Naharin during the 1992–1993 period was "Perpetuum." Set to Johann Strauss's music, it is far from "pretty," but rather suggests the underside of the sentimental Viennese world.

The Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company has also produced outstanding works under resident choreographer Rami Be'er. Be'er, who was born and raised in Kibbutz Ga'aton, creates in a style that is both uniquely personal and Israeli.
“Reservist’s Diary” presents the thoughts of an army reservist serving in the territories during the intifada. “Real Time” expresses Be’er’s own kibbutz childhood, the inner and outer aspects of life in a close-knit community. Be’er’s 1992 production “Black Angels” commemorated the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Catholic Spain. As described by Giora Manor: “Brightly-lit human figures floating in total darkness, a passionate duet for two men (perhaps Abraham sacrificing his son), and the fanatic figure of the Great Inquisitor all contribute to the emotionally charged picture.”

The husband-wife choreographer team of Liat Dror and Nir Ben-Gal also grew up in a kibbutz. Their style, according to Manor, is influenced by the dramatic physicality and emotional involvement of German dance theater. In “Two-room Apartment” and “Third Dance” they deal with the changing relations between a couple. “Donkeys” and “Figs,” works created for their own dance company, depict physical work and the defense of one’s territory. Manor speculates that the kibbutz is the source of Israel’s four most innovative dancer-choreographers (Ohad Naharin also grew up in a kibbutz) because of its “combination of self-discipline tempered by anarchism, and willingness to co-operate. . . . [Also] it is significant that kibbutz education is still attaching importance to artistic self-expression.”

During the last few years, the Bat Dor Dance Company under Janet Ordman staged excellent productions of works by the world’s finest contemporary choreographers, with what Dora Sowden described as “outstanding polish and glitter.” But it is not at the “cutting edge” of contemporary dance, nor can it boast a charismatic young choreographer like Naharin. Most of all, it has run into financial difficulties and is presently seeking more government support.

The Inbal Dance Company, which had been struggling with the question of what direction this Yemenite dance troupe should take after its founder Sara Levi-Tanai retired, seemed to be opening a new chapter. Rina Sharrett, who took over as artistic director in the early 1990s, has attempted to improve the technical level of the dancers, and young choreographers Ilana Cohen, Siki Kol, and Raheli Sela have created strong, dramatic works. In the spring of 1993, critic Dora Sowden noted that “a fiercer approach, an attempt at elemental rather than traditional lines of imagery indicated new directions — but nevertheless recognizably Inbal.” However, the company was deeply in debt, and a government report suggested it be disbanded. With the announcement that Margalit Oved would become house choreographer of the company, Inbal, like Batsheva, turned to an Israeli — a Yemenite who once danced with Inbal but went on to become an acclaimed modern dancer abroad — in the hope that she would be able to revitalize the company.

At the classical end of the scale, the Israel Ballet, established 25 years ago by Hillel Markman and Berta Yampolsky, attracted the largest audiences for dance, with productions that introduce young people to ballet. Originally a classical repertory company, the group has increasingly come to rely on Yampolsky’s choreography. According to Ruth Eshel, the Yampolsky interpretations of “Sleeping Beauty” and “Romeo and Juliet” are solid, well-built ballets, but lack the excitement of some
contemporary ballet interpretations. Eshel also indicated that Yampolsky has not encouraged younger choreographers of classical ballet.

Music

The subject of the absorption of musicians from the former Soviet Union and their influence continued to dominate the Israeli musical scene. According to research done by Prof. Yehoash Hershberg and Bella Braver, around 1,500 immigrant musicians had been tested and officially accorded the status of musician, as of 1993. This made them eligible for immigrant grants and support to purchase instruments. This figure did not include all those who had come, but the number of immigrant musicians seemed to be close to 2,000, lower than the 5,000 originally estimated. At the same time, musicians from the former Soviet Union continued to arrive.

The Russian aliyah has generated scores of new local orchestras and chamber groups in places like Rehovot, Ashdod, Ramat Hasharon, Raanana, and Carmiel. The Rishon Lezion Orchestra, which existed prior to the wave of immigration, was improved by the addition of fine Russian musicians and became the in-house orchestra of the New Israeli Opera. The new orchestras expose people in outlying areas to music of a high level, many for the first time. In Beersheba and Shderot, the orchestras conduct youth series, educating a new generation to classical music. At the same time, the immigrant musicians are able to continue their careers. Unfortunately, the wage is often minimal, and the artists must supplement their income by teaching and individual performing. The proliferation of orchestras means that certain types of musicians fare better than others, namely, string players. Since the Russians have a good reputation in this field, they are able to find jobs. By contrast, pianists and singers have more limited opportunities to perform.

A troubling question is how the new orchestras will survive when the Absorption Ministry's grants to immigrant musicians lapse after a few years. Municipal and private backing may not suffice, and there is danger that many new performance groups will collapse. If this happens, the absorption of musicians and their contribution to the country's music activity, which have been going well, might be reversed or retarded.

Original Israeli music continued to receive favorable attention. Among new works premiered during this period were Josef Tal's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and Menachem Zur's Second Symphony, a triptych consisting of "letters" to Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Berg. Reuven Serussy introduced a piano trio, and Yinnon Leaf presented his First Symphony. Andre Hajdu's "Dreams of Spain," commissioned for the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of Jews from Spain, is a cantata based on documents of the time, integrating Jewish folk themes and liturgical music with hymns of the Spanish Church.
Perhaps the most important new development in recent years has been the flourishing of the New Israeli Opera, the latest of several attempts to install opera in the country. Conductor Mordechai Golinkin, who brought opera to Israel in 1923, saw its establishment as part of Jewish nationalism and the renewal of Jewish culture, with Verdi, Puccini, and Mozart sung in Hebrew as well as operas being written on Jewish subjects. Golinkin, who managed to put together a troupe of 15 soloists and 30 choir members, nevertheless did not find the support he needed, and the group disbanded in 1929.

In 1941 the Palestine Folk Opera was established, but it too failed to become rooted. The American soprano Edi de Philippe restored opera in 1947, creating the Israel National Opera, and brought Golinkin back. In 1958 the opera received a home on the Tel Aviv seashore, de Phillippe brought in internationally known opera stars, staged operas never seen before in Israel, and altogether could boast 80 productions and 6,000 appearances all over the country, until 1982 when the opera closed down. Israeli composer Marc Lavry wrote the first original operatic work in the country, Dan Hashomer, in 1945, and Menachem Avidom wrote Alexandra. Composer Josef Tal has written many operas, including Saul in Endor, Amnon and Tamar, and Metzada 1967.

In 1984 the New Israeli Opera was established, backed by the Cameri Theater and the Israel Chamber Orchestra, and hoping to attract a new, younger audience. Attempting to keep a sense of continuity with the old opera, some of the older singers, like tenor Sami Bachar, were retained, while many bright new lights, like Hadar Halevi and Gil Sadeh, were introduced. Some of the highlights of the new company's productions were Leos Janacek's Jenufa, based on the Chekhov story, Marriage of Figaro, and the 1992 production of Aida at Caesarea, which was seen by 36,000 Israelis. Proof that the company had hit a responsive chord was the increase in subscriptions, from 300 at its inception to 15,000 in 1993. In the meantime, with former mayor Shlomo Lahat's support, a grand new opera house was being built as part of the Israel Center of the Arts, to be opened in 1994.

Art

"What characterizes Israeli artists today," said gallery owner Dafna Naor, "is that there are no differences between what is being done here and what is being done in the rest of the world. Israelis read the same art journals, know what is happening, are part of it." The pluralism that exists internationally, with artists working in a variety of materials and styles, is evident in Israel too.

In recent years there has been, in Israel as well as the rest of the world, a movement away from conceptualism, which places emphasis on the idea of the object, and toward a focus on the object itself. According to artist Larry Abramson, head of the Bezalel Art School, the decision to be involved with the specific reflects,
at least in part, a suspicion of the grand ideologies that dominated at the beginning of the century, whether political movements like socialism or Zionism or whether modernism in art.

In Abramson's exhibit "Accidental Connections," shown in 1993 in the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion of the Tel Aviv Museum, he questioned the myth of modern art by putting himself in dialogue with a modern artist of the past. His paintings are essentially a criticism of early 20th-century Russian artist Kasimir Malevitch, who claimed that everything was contained in the "black square," that after the black square, there was no longer the possibility of art. Abramson takes natural objects like a leaf and the moon and adds them to the black square, playing with them, positioning them in various ways, indicating that things can still be done to the black square. Although he uses natural objects, his works do not become naturalistic paintings. Rather, they look like icons. "But," insists Abramson, "they are not fixed signs. They are fluid icons, like life. They have no absolute meaning."

The focus on the content of the object, as well as the postmodernist rejection of ideology, including Zionism, has given rise to an identification with the individual, particularly the oppressed individual — the homosexual, the woman, and, in Israel's case, the Arab — and to a more blatant polemical message, a more political art. To some extent, this has been a consequence of the work of a new generation of curators who have put together exhibits with what are ultimately political messages. Most prescient politically has been the development of an exciting "alternative space" for art, the Bograshov Gallery in Tel Aviv, which has become an important forum for inter-art activities. Its curator, Ariella Azulai, has been instrumental in highlighting the societal context of art, making it clear that art does not exist autonomously as "formal relationships" but is part of a concrete social reality. The exhibit "Khaki-Green," curated by Azulai, included David Reeb, who has painted what seem like clearly realistic works of Israeli soldiers harassing Palestinians. But Reeb's technique includes the modernist involvement with the medium itself. Reeb photographs soldiers in the territories and then projects them onto large sheets of cloth, and paints in the projection. The seemingly realistic painting is flattened and distanced by the photography. Reeb has said, "I don't understand how a person who has a conscience can live in a country in such ferment and not react directly."

EXHIBITS OF YOUNG ARTISTS

Critic Haim Losky pointed to the 1993 exhibit of young artists, "Third Person," as an example of the Israeli's positive sense of self, of comfort with contemporary art. The exhibit included a fusion of video, poster-photography, home movies, and environmental design and bore witness to the growing emphasis on the object in Israeli art. The Tel Aviv Museum exhibit "Subtropical: Figurative As Well As Abstract" claimed that Israeli art has never absolutely given up the figurative, as happened in the United States. The basic tendency has been for a fusion of the two. This exhibit was paired with a photography exhibit, "The Range of Realism," which
demonstrated the political-social power of photography in the largest sense and the new emphasis on political content. It indicated, too, how photography was influencing the greater pictorialism in Israeli art. This was also articulated in “The New Abstract,” an exhibit in which there was a meeting between the abstract and the pictorial, but this time the emphasis was on the abstract.

It was the exhibit “This in the House, This in the Courtyard,” curated by Moshe Ninio at the Israel Museum in September 1993, that seemed to point to a new direction. In “The Tree and a Sleeping Bag,” for example, Gil Shachar created a tree, a concrete natural object that is not naturalistic but is rather a universal icon with a radiance about it. The works in this exhibit had figurative elements as well as mystical ones, hiding as much as they revealed.

RUSSIAN ARTISTS

At the beginning of the 1970s, a wave of Russian avant-garde artists came to Israel. While most of these artists went on to live in other places in the Western world, Mikhail Grobman remained in Israel, working in a mode that combines figurative and conceptual art. He has been joined by Zakhar Sherman, who immigrated to Israel in 1990. They both participated in the 1993 exhibit in Cologne, Germany, “From Malevitch to Kabakov, Russian Avant-Garde in the Twentieth Century.”

Cable Television

A discussion of Israeli culture must take note of the expansion of the media, particularly the creation of a Second Channel on television and the proliferation of viewers watching cable TV. In spite of forecasts to the contrary, Israelis apparently want their programs to be home-grown and in Hebrew. Although many imported TV series have been popular, none has achieved the rating that Dallas once had. Media experts believe that Israelis like programs reflecting their own life and the issues that affect them, but they want it light, showing a preference for comedy and light entertainment. Perhaps as part of the post-Zionist mood they are no longer as addicted to the news as they once were — not as fearful for Israel’s survival — and have been able to allow themselves to relax and, for a time, at least, escape the burden of their collective destiny.

Rochelle Furstenberg