

# Reparations from Germany

## Introduction

Since the State of Israel came into existence only several years after the end of World War II, its material claims against Germany, and those of the Jews of occupied Europe, victims of the Holocaust and their survivors, were dealt with in an offhand manner by the Allies; one—the Soviet Union—did not reply at all to Israel's representations. When Chancellor Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the FRG, declared in September 1951 that he considered it as an "obligation of the German people to make compensation to the Jews," World Jewry—and Israel—were faced with the dilemma of either rejecting the offer, or establishing direct contact with the Government of the FRG in order to reach an agreement, in spite of the revulsion against any contact with Germany and the acceptance of "blood money." (The DDR, consistently considering itself as a victim rather than an heir to the perpetrators of Nazi atrocities, never considered the question of reparations.)

The issue gave rise to one of the most dramatic, soul-searching and heated debates in the Knesset, which took place against the background of a violent demonstration in the immediate proximity to the building in which stones were thrown into the Knesset itself.

## Sitting 38 of the Second Knesset

7 January 1952 (9 Tevet 5712)

### Prime Minister's Statement

**The Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion:** Mr. Chairman, honorable Members of the Knesset, as the members of the First Knesset will recall, the Government of Israel submitted a note on 6 January 1951 to the governments of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France, regarding Germany's obligation in respect to compensation and the restoration of property to the Jews. That note referred to payments and restitution owed to individual Jews, and it was stated that the satisfaction of all of these individual claims would not in any way absolve the German people of its heavy obligation to the Jewish people for the theft of property and possessions belonging to Jews throughout Europe, who were driven to the slaughter and who left no heirs.

Accordingly, the Government presented a second claim to these same four powers on 12 March 1951 in a formal sense unprecedented in the realm of international relations. In this note the Government of Is-

rael demanded the imposition of a levy upon Germany, East and West, in the amount of \$1.5 billion, a figure which represents only part of the plundered Jewish property. This claim was made on the basis of the perception that the German nation in its entirety bears the responsibility for the murder and plunder of the Jewish people in Europe, and that this responsibility falls indiscriminately upon both segments of modern-day Germany. It was further noted that the State of Israel has both the right and the obligation to demand satisfaction in the name of the millions who were slaughtered, as well as to make claims regarding their rights and property, as the sole sovereign manifestation of that nation, membership in which was the sole reason why millions of people were killed and cremated in ovens and in gas chambers, and their property confiscated, their goods plundered.

The amount of the claim was determined according to two basic assumptions: 1) that it is our moral obligation to retrieve as much as possible of the stolen property of those Jews who left no heirs, and to recover from the murderers and their successors both in East and West Germany the inheritance of Israel, lest the murderer also be the beneficiary; 2) that the State of Israel, with the aid of Jewish communities throughout the world, has taken upon itself the obligation of absorbing the survivors of the Holocaust and rehabilitating them in this country, and for that purpose it must salvage the stolen Jewish property presently held by the Germans.

The note states that this claim has no precedent, in that the State of Israel did not exist at the time of the Holocaust and did not have the privilege of fighting against Nazi Germany with its own army, regardless of the fact that thousands of its sons volunteered for Jewish units—foremost among them, the Jewish Brigade—all of which took part in the defeat of Hitler's regime, alongside the Allied armies. It was likewise noted that there is no precedent for the enormity of the slaughter and plunder perpetrated against the Jews of Europe by the German people under Hitler.

More than 6 million Jews were killed by torture, starvation, mass murder and mass suffocation. Many were burned and buried alive; they took no pity upon the old, the women or the children, and infants were snatched from their mothers' arms and thrown into the furnaces. Prior to this systematic mass murder as well as coincidental with it, there was the plundering, also on a vast unprecedented scale. According to a very cautious estimation during the Hitler period, the Germans plundered Jewish property worth approximately 6 billion dollars in Germany proper and in the other countries under Nazi rule. And there are estimates which are higher yet.

A crime as great and awful as this cannot be atoned for by any material compensation. No payment, no matter how large, can compensate

for the loss of human life or for the suffering and agony of men, women and children, old people and infants.

Moreover, the German people, both in the East and in the West, continued to enjoy the fruits of the slaughter, the spoils plundered from the murdered Jews, even after the defeat of Hitler.

Palestine played a decisive role in the absorption of refugees from Germany after the outbreak of Nazi persecutions in 1933 and well before the establishment of the State of Israel. During the [Second World] War, the men of the Jewish Brigade were the first Jews to make contact with the survivors in the concentration camps and in the death camps of Germany and Central Europe, to encourage them and to bring them the message of the creative and fighting homeland; with the establishment of the State of Israel, it opened its gates to all the wanderers and survivors from the lands of death, and hundreds of thousands have reached this haven of refuge in an independent Israel in the last two or three years.

Most of the survivors brought only their souls with them as all of their possessions had been stolen. The Government of Israel took upon itself a monumental effort, itself unprecedented in recent history and possibly even in earlier generations: to absorb and rehabilitate hundreds of thousands of immigrants possessing nothing more than their skins, over a short period of time within a young, poor and besieged state. The burden which this large influx of people bereft of capital places upon the state is beyond its capacity and the Jewish communities in the free world considered it their responsibility to participate in this great undertaking, but with it all, the burden upon the state is a heavy one.

The government of Israel has stipulated a figure of \$1.5 billion which it claims for Israel from both parts of Germany as this is the minimum amount needed for the absorption and rehabilitation of the half a million immigrants from the countries under Nazi rule, even though, according to the documented estimation of authorities on the subject, the theft was many times greater.

Payments of these reparations does not absolve the German authorities, either in the West or in the East, from the responsibility of paying that which is due, either to individual Jews living among us or to their legitimate heirs, for that which was plundered. These reparations will be claimed by the representatives of world Jewry.

As I have stated, this note was sent to the four occupying powers: the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France and referred to both parts of modern Germany, the western and the eastern.

To date, we have not received any response from the Soviet Union nor are we aware of any response on the part of East Germany. We have received an official reply from the other three powers, all three phrased

almost identically. The replies were formulated on 5 July 1951 about four months after our note was submitted.

The American Government, in its note to the Israeli Ambassador in Washington, writes that the Government of Israel must certainly be aware of the fact that the heinous crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Nazi regime in the planned destruction and despoiling of masses of Jews in Europe have aroused in the American people and in its government revulsion and resentment.

The Government of Israel, it continues, must also be aware of the fact that since the beginning of the German conquest, it has been the determined policy of the American Government to bring to justice all those responsible for the planning and execution of this crime and to rectify the injustice done to the victims of Nazi persecution to the greatest possible extent. Furthermore, the U.S. Government notes that it granted asylum to thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi persecution during the war and that after the war, special laws were enacted which opened the gates to many who remained bereft and empty-handed as a result of the war and the Nazi persecution. It also made considerable contributions, along with Great Britain and France, to the various refugee organizations and among them to the organization known as IRO, which settled refugees in Israel.

While the Jewish victims of the Nazis—the United States note continues—were not represented at the Claims Conference in Paris, a sum of \$25,000,000 was set aside out of German funds deposited in neutral countries for the rehabilitation of the victims of the Nazis and it was acknowledged at the time that most of the latter were Jews. It was thus decided that 90 percent of this amount, as well as all the property in respect to which there were no heirs in these countries, would be used on behalf of these victims among the Jews. The U.S. Government does not believe that these reparations made to Jewish refugees were sufficient compensation for their suffering. The United States Government agrees with the Israel Government that no material compensation could suffice. However, the United States Government notes that other nations which suffered greatly from the Nazi blows have no chance of receiving payments which would compensate them to any considerable degree. The main thrust of the note, and of the notes of the other two countries—Great Britain and France—as well, is that in light of certain agreements to which the United States is party, it is not entitled to demand additional compensation from Germany at this time, neither for itself nor for others.

Both Great Britain and France responded in this same spirit.

In all truth, it must be said that this formal response did not reflect the full, definitive position taken by these three countries. In these countries, there is not only the government, there is also unfettered public opinion capable of influencing both its own government and other

nations as well. There are also free Jewish communities in these countries whose voice, pain and demands, while not being decisive, do carry considerable weight. Public opinion in these countries, both general and Jewish, was not satisfied with a formalistic stance and Platonic expressions of sympathy on the part of their governments, but rather demanded the righting of the injustice in so far as possible, at least in respect to the return of the loot. This pressure of public opinion led the Prime Minister of West Germany to declare, at the end of September 1951, that the atrocities committed against the Jews during the Nazi regime obligate the German people to make compensation to the Jewish people, which declaration was then approved by the West German Parliament.

At the end of October 1951, through the initiative of the Jewish Agency, a conference of Jewish organizations from the United States, Canada, South Africa, South America, the countries of Western Europe and Australia, as well as such worldwide Jewish organizations as the Jewish Agency, Agudat Yisrael, the World Jewish Congress, etc. was held in New York to discuss the matter of Jewry's claim against Germany. In a unanimous decision, the [Claims] Conference in fact identified with the Israeli Government's note to the four powers. The Conference likewise declared that there could be no atonement or material compensation for the extent and cruelty of the Nazi regime relative to the Jews. No reparations, no matter how large they might be, could void the annihilation of millions of Jews and the destruction of their cultural assets. At the same time, the Conference of the Jewish People decided to demand at least the return of plundered Jewish property, compensation to the victims of persecution, their heirs and their descendants and the promise of reparations for the rehabilitation of the dispossessed, as demanded by the Government of Israel in its note of 12 March 1951.

The Conference declared that the declaration of the West German Prime Minister would be judged and assessed in the light of actions taken by his government, and according to the speed and scope of their execution. It expressed its full and firm support for the claims of the Government of Israel for the payment of \$1.5 billion by East and West Germany. It demanded the satisfaction of the rest of the Jewish claims against Germany, including the claims of Jewish individuals and organizations.

In consequence of the pressure created by this conference, and through the friendly intervention of government circles in Great Britain and other countries, the Prime Minister in Bonn, West Germany, undertook in writing, several weeks ago, in the name of his government, to discuss reparations payments with the State of Israel and representatives of world Jewry, based upon the claims made by the State of Israel in its note of 12 March 1951.

The Government of Israel, as well as the entire Jewish people, holds the German people responsible for the atrocities committed during the Second World War against European Jewry. These atrocities will never be forgotten. And any regime in Germany, either in the West or in the East, which does not make a full, firm and practical effort to repair that which can be repaired cannot free itself from the full responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis. The righting of injustice does not relate solely to the realm of the material, the reimbursement to individual Jews, Jewish organizations, the Jewish people and the State of Israel for that which was taken from them forcibly. It is the obligation of the United Nations—all those united nations which are true to the principles of peace and human dignity—to prevent the Germans from evading their weighty responsibility, possibly unparalleled in human history. And, at the United Nations General Assembly now in progress in Paris, the Government of Israel has expressed its fear and concern regarding the danger inherent in the arming of West and East Germany.

At the same time, the Government of Israel considers it its obligation, together with the representatives of world Jewry, and without undue delay, to make all the appropriate efforts to [facilitate] maximal and speedy repayment to individual Jews and to the Jewish people for that which was taken from them, in accordance with the demands stated in our note of 12 March 1951.

Let not the murderers of our people also be their heirs!

### Debate

**Elimelech Rimalt (General Zionists):** The government is requesting that the Knesset give it the authority to negotiate at the present time with the West German Government for compensation for confiscated property, referred to, for some reason, by the term "reparations." This matter has engaged public opinion for many months. It has stirred up agitation for some time and continues to do so; as the date of the debate approached—the Knesset insisted upon holding a debate on the subject—the general agitation increased. I am certain that the question is a painful one even for those who endorse direct negotiations with the Germans. I am certain that those groups—the government and the parties—who demand that we grant them the authority to negotiate the payments (this term is more appropriate in the present circumstances; reparations smacks of revenge and retaliation), even they do so not without hesitation and inner conflict. The argument is permeated with pain, saturated with memories of tragedy and inexpressible nameless holocaust, unparalleled and unprecedented even in our own history—we, a people used to suffering and torture, a people reared on destruction, in the physical if not the spiritual sense. It is essential that the discussion in this

chamber be conducted on the highest moral level of which we are capable. We must not adopt the stance of the righteous confronting the wicked, the loyalist versus the traitor, the "goodies" versus the "badies"; we must argue with brothers who, in our opinion, are mistaken and terribly confused. At one time our people had an absolute criteria: the Torah, the spiritual legacy, common to all the people and binding upon all. Even if there were differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of this legacy in respect to this or that scriptural passage, sometimes even contradictory opinions, there was always the possibility of turning to a "third passage which would decide between them", that decisive passage also being acceptable to all, none doubting its authority. Today we have no authoritative binding moral criteria. For a short time in the recent past, the Zionist movement and the values of the national reawakening were able to provide such criteria; that was a period in which we all not only spoke one common language but also thought in the same terms.

It is so paradoxical that precisely with the establishment of the state, the culmination of the yearnings of generations, it is as if we lost this commonly-shared standard, so that now we are searching for that "third decisive authoritative source", binding upon us all, and this explains why we are confused. We must conduct a serious, bitter and painful debate against the background of the tragedy of the Holocaust, and it is tragic that this question has even come up for discussion at all, no matter how positive are the intentions of its proposers and of those who are in favor of the negotiations.

One more point by way of introduction. We will not be able to refrain, for the purpose of this debate, from calling upon witnesses of whose blood-chilling presence we are all aware. We must not blaspheme their memory; let us not turn this polemic into a cheap partisan fight and let us not try to make political capital out of it, for the pain is too deep and the heart of each and every one of us bleeds. Willingly or unwillingly, we will turn these sessions into such an awful memorial for the dead, such as this house has yet to witness. Consequently, we must conduct an amicable debate out of anguish. We will attempt to convince you, to imbue you with our perception, arouse, to shock and to knock however conscientiously, upon the closed hearts of the Knesset and of the nation at large.

The debate will be difficult for yet another reason, in that it will not be balanced. There are two basic forces at work in the soul of the individual and apparently in the collective soul of the people. One is that of logic, reason, systematic thought based upon rules which appear to be common to the human race. The normal, civilized person makes use of his logic, his rational capacities, in practical everyday living. The second force is the non-rational or the emotional. In the case of normal healthy people, under ordinary circumstance, these forces operate in

different areas. Logic and reason rule in the practical realm, while feeling and emotion control the spiritual realms, such as religion, art, etc. However, there are times when these areas become confused, thus bringing about tragedy in the life of the individual or of the nation. Whether it is the emotional faculty which takes over in areas in which straight practical logic should direct and guide man, or whether in exceptional and critical times, when the weak beam of logic, or ordinary common sense, is insufficient to light the way, to show the way out of the labyrinth, man nevertheless depends upon reason and acts according to cold logic—in such situations, the outcome may well be tragic.

There are also moments in the life of nations when cold logic cannot provide more than a weak light. Were all of man's thought processes outside the realm of the irrational and only influenced by logic, then there would be no room for debate, as rational logic is objective, its arguments lucid and convincing. But not all of our thinking is logical. Our thought processes are to some extent influenced by the irrational, which is what makes discussion possible.

As for the issue under discussion, the proponents of the proposal, whatever their intention, base their argument upon logic: "They have murdered, should they inherit as well? The State of Israel needs money and assistance in order to fortify itself, the state is the embodiment of the yearnings of generations, perhaps we can see this as retribution of sorts, some kind of justice, if we use this money to strengthen the state." This is the rational approach. But those who are opposed cannot argue in this vein, because the discussion is based upon something without precedent. The Americans claim that other people also suffered damages and did not receive full reimbursement for that which was stolen from them, and we, wanting to be compensated for this theft, have now shifted the argument onto dangerous grounds: compensation for plunder and humiliation. There are many precedents for the plunder of Jewish property in the history of the Jewish people. What nation didn't plunder us? Rome, Byzantium, every nation which conquered and trampled the Jews stole their money and then exiled them from their land. But this slaughter, this Holocaust, this has no precedent in any generation. And it was not just some barbaric nation from the Asian steppe, nor wild men from the desert in the habit of slaughtering and plundering. This was a civilized nation, possibly the most civilized in the world in the technical and material sense, university professors, educated doctors, an entire nation with all its abilities, its skills, with all its technical knowhow, slaughtered a second nation. What for? What was the rational, logical reason? Not only did they steal, they stole and murdered. This German hatred derived from the realm of the darkest impulses deep down within the beast in man. There is no rational explanation why people, educated people, should torture children to the sound of a military band; should drag infants to cremation and to slaughter. Is

there any one of us who has not seen the pictures taken by the Germans of the piles of corpses out of which, here and there, there appears the clenched fist of a dead man, a terrifying protest to heaven? They were proud of what they did, of those pictures. How was this crime logical? Can it be dealt with in the realm of logic and rational argumentation? Is there any wonder that there is a reaction beyond that of logic and reason? And since when is logic the decisive factor in our lives? Indeed, our entire history is often nothing else than a revolt against simple logic. The proof is that for two thousand years the Jewish people yearned for and aspired to a country in which it actually dwelt less than two thousand years—if you add up all the years in which our people inhabited its own land, from the Patriarch Abraham to the destruction of the Second Temple, the total is less than two thousand years....Zionism taught us that the people as such cannot find a solution in assimilation but rather in national renaissance and the return to our homeland. The very idea of nation is however only a recent chapter in modern history; in the Middle Ages, individuals were able to adapt, to choose the logical path and escape the suffering [through conversion to another faith—N.L.], and in the modern period every assimilated Jew could certainly escape. But the Jew retained something incomprehensible which tied him to his people, namely the sense of the uniqueness of the Jewish destiny, which demands of a person that he not do that which is to his personal advantage but rather precisely that which it is not worth his while to do.

Consider what else the Germans have done to us. As if according to some diabolic plan, they also wanted to deprive us of the sanctity of "hallowing God's Name." In fact, all of them, all of the holy victims, "hallowed God's Name," but what does this concept really mean? If I have the choice of running away, disappearing, of dodging the Jewish destiny, and thus of saving myself, but I choose to go to the gallows, then I have done so out of my own free choice. But there is no "hallowing of God's Name," without free choice, if I am not allowed the moral act of deciding in favor of death with sanctification as opposed to a life of contamination. The evil Hitler did not allow us this choice, no one could escape or find refuge from this destiny, there was no possibility of being saved.

...Our national vision is not measured by its inherent logic. And we will not be able to exist here in this state without a vision. Many nations and states have had money. The economy has not as yet been able to rescue a nation when its vision ceased to exist, when it ceased to cherish and value moral values, for there is nothing so worthwhile, so essential, that the moral foundations of the nation should be sacrificed in its favor. It is in this sense that Zionists were opposed to Uganda; this is why there was opposition to many of the solutions which Zionism presented; for this reason we were opposed to the Crimea, to Birobidzhan, to

many things which appeared attractive, and it was out of the deep irrational will that those who took the decision decided in favor of the struggle and the establishment of the State of Israel in the face of all logical considerations.

And here we think that it is possible to settle an account of generations which we have with the Germans, in terms of rates and payments. We think that it is possible to say: We will take their money, it is rightfully ours, but there is no reconciliation. We will not be on speaking terms, we will loathe them, we will hate them but we will take the money from them. It is quite a different matter if a nation is victorious over its enemy, and conquers his country, so that the enemy is downtrodden and vanquished, as the Germans were in 1945...and the victors extract a contribution from the vanquished. That would have been in some way connected with reparations. But now we must make a "gentleman's agreement" with the Germans, who are once more on top, who are much sought after, and the Germans of the West and of the East are the same, as a nation does not change within a period of a few years. A nation most of whose people were murderers—the few who were not either fled abroad or were interned—a nation like that doesn't change quickly. And it is with these "gentlemen" that we are to enter into a "gentleman's agreement."

And we, in stately manner, are about to sit down together with them at one table....They dictate the terms of the negotiations and we, not being barbarians, will sit down with them at the table, drink with them, clasp many hands which have shed blood, the blood of our brothers and our parents. It may be that the West German Chancellor is not one of the killers, maybe he is different—better—than the vast majority of his people, but what about his followers? I do not know what is happening in the East—there there is an Iron Curtain—but we do not even know how much time will elapse before the Nazi Remer [General Remer, neo-Nazi leader] takes over from Adenauer.

There is really no difference between money and its equivalent when it comes from the Germans. But what do they offer us? Merchandise! We will have to go out and peddle German goods in the world. We will receive crates from Germany which may have written on them, in a concealed hand: *Jude Verrecke*. There are Nazi stevedores who would send such a message to us. And what motivates them to do this? Why do they want to pay up? Maybe the good ones amongst them want to salve their conscience, maybe they want to attain quiet through the compensation, nights without nightmares of remorse, without the vampire of pangs of conscience. Perhaps we should leave them like this, allow their nightmares and vampires to churn up their blood and the juice of their conscience, leave them with the mark of Cain upon their foreheads. We are forbidden to remove it. For if there is any rhyme or reason in history, then the mark of Cain must remain upon the forehead of this nation.

It is a good thing that the good ones among them not find rest, that they remember what their people brought about and tremble. But if we enter into a bargain with them and say, in the manner of our casuistic Jewish reasoning: We have taken the money but we have not forgiven. What will they say? They will simply not believe it. And the nations are familiar with the ancient adage: where there is trade, there is social intercourse.

And what shall we tell the youth, our children, whom we have brought up to think in terms of values, for whom profitability is not necessarily the standard. Will we be able to prevent them from figuring out the amount we will receive and dividing it by the number of skulls. My little son came to me and asked me, how much will we get for grandma and grandpa? for both of my parents were murdered. These matters are too serious and too painful for us. We did not want to bring this bitter argument down to the level of a political polemic and you know that this is so.

And one more thing, perhaps the worst of all. I don't know what we will receive. Let us assume that we receive compensation. Have we imagined to ourselves the moral destruction which will ensue? For we are a people with something peculiar, a special Jewish spiritual uniqueness, without which there is no hope, and no existence for the state, or for the Jewish people even if there is a state. This uniqueness guarded us through all the generations and did not allow us to be destroyed.

What will remain of this moral uniqueness if we remove all the barriers, if we lose the concept of the "prohibition against benefit." We once had such a concept, not only juridically speaking but also ethically—and what if we say, we are permitted to derive benefit from everything? Let us not rationalize it by "shalt thou kill and also inherit." In the case of King Ahab, the murder was committed in order to claim the inheritance, and the punishment had to be in keeping with the crime....But Hitler did not kill the Jews for their money. He could have, and did, get their money without committing murder. The German people committed murder out of the basest of impulses. Maybe we should leave the mark of Cain upon the whole world for we believe that the world will not achieve peace and quiet, even if we do reach some compromise between the various social regimes, if the original sin of mankind against the Jewish people is not atoned for, and if there are no guarantees that what happened in recent years will not be repeated in the history of mankind. This world does not need peace and tranquility and we ourselves are contributing to its artificial calm, to the calming of its impure soul.

It may be said that it was the Holocaust which brought about the establishment of the State of Israel, and this, for two reasons: It came into being not only after we saw what could be done to us and we said: there is no refuge, no salvation and no existence for the Jewish people without a

state of its own; tomorrow there will be a Maidanek here and the next day, there. This was the logical reason. But at the subconscious level, there was another reason. What shook us so badly after we recovered from the first blow? A tragic thought that maybe, Heaven forbid, there is no reason for the suffering, the slaughter and the tragedy. Is there any ethical/moral sense to this awful Holocaust? Was it all for naught? In vain?

During the struggle of the War of Independence, there was a strengthening of the deep awareness that indeed there was a purpose, a higher logic, regarding all this inexpressible suffering: it gave birth to the State of Israel, the culmination of the yearning of generations. And under what circumstances does this awful memorial have the power to serve as an eternal warning to all of humanity and to the Jewish people? (We do not differentiate between Jewish morality and human morality, for the former has never foresworn that morality which is universally accepted.) Only if it is unmarred, undiminished, and if we do not turn our account with Germany into a bargaining session over money.

Let us not pay attention to the staged wrath nor to the shouting in the streets, because these sounds are likely to silence the inner voice which each one of us must hear within his soul. All of us, the endorsers and the negaters—even the endorsers—hear the voice which says to us: Jews, what are you about to do? At this point, the Knesset has no alternative but to decide that there will be no negotiations with murderers! The account cannot be settled in this generation. And if we do receive reparations, then the Talmudic adage: "He who pays is not lashed" is applicable, both in the ethical as well as the juridical sense. There is no alternative but to decide that we will not accept blood-money from bloody hands.

The state is in need of funds and of means with which to strengthen itself. Let us all make a joint effort on behalf of the state; this money will not bring us salvation. It is a matter of belief and it is difficult to discuss it in terms of an adding machine, because it is tainted with blood, a curse is attached to this money. It damages the ethical backbone of each one individually as well as of the nation as a whole, the subconscious spiritual core of our very being.

Let us not add to the day of calamity which falls tomorrow, on the 10th day of Tevet, yet another calamity, the final breakdown of the highest values of our people, the ethical value which is neither understood through logic nor measured in mathematical terms, on utilitarian grounds or by utilitarian considerations; neither is it justified on the basis of need. Defeat the motion. Let us free ourselves and the nation from this nightmare. As with every healthy organism, if you damage its equilibrium it will go into convulsion, make strange distorted movements and will not find repose. The decision to accept reparations may well damage the moral, spiritual equilibrium of the nation, may affect its moral strength. It will lead to general disquietude. Let us not

do this thing. Just a few minutes ago, from this very podium, we were told something which is very true: there are governments and there are governments. There are those which make decisions according to their own volition and there are regimes in which public opinion exerts an influence, public opinion which is the litmus paper of a free regime. With the consent of the general public and of all those who are not present this day but are dumb witnesses to this debate, let us remove this question from the agenda.

**Yaakov Hazan (Mapam):** Honorable Knesset members, on the 5th of November the fateful debate on foreign policy was held in this hall. The implications of this government's recommendation and the decision which was passed by a majority of the plenum meant the relinquishing of our political independence. This has resulted in a deep political rift within the population, a rift which continues to deepen and which threatens our very future.

Today we have the continuation of the above, only seven times more serious. Today the government is suggesting that we relinquish our spiritual independence, the sale of the soul following the sale of the body.

There are two situations in which we would be justified in dealing with the question of reparations from Germany: 1) if the vanquished Germany had been ordered to return to us all that had been stolen from us, in the same way as it was obligated by the victorious powers at the end of the war to make a "reparations;" 2) if we were dealing with a German nation which had mercilessly wiped out both Nazism and the Nazis in its midst, in this way making atonement for its sins and expressing its readiness not to pay reparations but rather to return all the property stolen from the Jewish people.

But what is the reality? 1) The victors, our Western "friends," did not want to include us among the victors or among the recipients of the "reparations," and not without reason. 2) The German people did not wipe out Nazism, or kill the Nazis. On the contrary: Nazism is enjoying a renaissance in Germany and it is our Western "friends" who are nurturing this Nazism, they are reestablishing Nazi Germany with a renewed mandate to make the world tremble. Now, it is with this Nazi Germany that they are suggesting that we conduct negotiations, the significance of which is very simple: the denial of the heroic struggle of the ghetto fighters, a betrayal of the hell of suffering experienced by the Jewish people.

This is the shattering inner Jewish reality of this motion. But what is the political agenda hiding behind the entire question of these reparations? We heard a clear answer on the day after the first announcement was made on Radio Berlin by Adenauer. Radio Berlin stated that we should not hope for much reparations. They—the Germans—are, as we know, a poor nation. But in my opinion this is not really the major prob-

lem. In the final analysis, these are matters of the past. The main problem is that we, the Jews, and they, the Germans are now together in one boat and we are obliged to work together to save human civilization from the danger of communism "which threatens to destroy Western civilization, to wipe us out together with our brethren." This is the claim of Radio Berlin, and this and only this is the true significance of the agreement to negotiate with them.

What is it that the government is suggesting? It is suggesting something very peculiar, something which even a political novice would not believe possible or plausible: to conduct negotiations with the German Government while not recognizing the German Government. Nothing of this kind has ever been done by any country in the world, nor will it be achieved by us. This is an example of squaring the circle. Negotiations over reparations with the Bonn Government is recognition of neo-Nazi Germany. This is the essence, this is the awful political conclusion arising of necessity from all of the negotiations.... You want to give these murderers gratis that which they did not achieve through murder—you want to place them in the center of Europe, and the price tag on the gift—a new agency for international murder. They want them to lead Europe against the Soviet Union. And you want to be a party to the white-washing of this despicable worm? We, the State of Israel, which is the sole heir of six million, which was even ready to pass a law which would make those six million citizens of the Land of Israel—we should exonerate this worm? Do you not see that this is the significance of your motion?...

If this motion is passed, it means that we will be entering into official negotiations with a government run mainly by ex-Nazis, and whose army is already Nazi. That is not all. The most awful part of it is that they are already preparing us to be partners in that camp in which the Nazis will be the foremost, determining factor. Our army, the Israel Defense Forces, will unwittingly enter into the political arena and will find itself in the same camp as the Nazi army, while the Nazis who are already found in our region will begin to penetrate it, not as the most awful enemies but as our partners, and there is nothing more awful than that. This is the true significance of the Government's motion.

I don't see anything else in it. I understand that there is concern over our economic future and that there are financial worries. There shall be no reparations. They have already deceived the entire world once. They deceived a world which had the power to compel them, and they won't deceive us? Did they pay reparations after World War I? Haven't they already begun to default on what they owe from World War II? That is how they will pay us as well. We will receive pennies, for which we will forfeit our entire world. How can we allow ourselves to be caught so awfully in that same net of deception which would turn

us, the victims of Nazi murder, into the sponsor whose task it is to reinstate the Nazis into the international arena....

The motion presented by the Government will certainly create this situation. It has already meant that when we came to the Knesset today, we found it surrounded by barbed wire. We saw many policemen, prepared for action. And the witch's dance, the frenzy, has already begun amongst ourselves....

We are discussing one of the most tragic problems of our life, a problem which must of necessity deepen the chasms of alienation and animosity within our nation, so that we will cease to understand one another, and all this in a period in which existence will be impossible without some sense of national solidarity, no matter how small, and despite the contradictions, and without the conviction that despite everything, we all live within the same moral world. The Government's motion places all this in jeopardy. It means the reconfirmation of the Bonn Government, it means our incorporation into a camp in which the German army will be the main army, that we will march together with them in the new world murder parade. It means that we must extend a hand to those who will once again be murderers of our people, that is sure. They will return to the stage of history as they are today—Nazis. And those who give us reparations will murder us all over again...wherever they are...even here. These are our new partners.

This is why we are protesting with all our strength, with all our spiritual forces, against this thing. We shall vote without hesitation against the motion. And after the vote, we shall not regard the motion as binding upon us. We shall carry on the fight and the mobilization of the masses in Israel against this proposal which we consider to be one of the worst things which the Government has brought upon us.

**Yizhak Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi):** Honorable Knesset. Today's debate is without doubt bitter and tragic and requires a serious and well-considered approach. Only one immersed in the depths of the Halacha [Jewish law], who has been persistently bothered by this question and has examined it from all sides, in the light of the love of Israel which is in his heart, only such a one is capable of taking a stand pro or con, and has the right to do so.

A debate of this sort requires an atmosphere of calm and quiet in which to listen to each other, to hear each other and try to understand one another. My heart is open to the negators. I have read their articles and their propaganda. I have thought, I have considered the matter and I have decided not to accept their decision. In matters such as these, history is disqualified, especially when it is employed artificially....

What is required is a response which comes from within, which is to the point and is free of all foreign side issues. We must deal with the issues on their own merits, and not under the influence of the party gavel, in accordance with factional loyalties. We have heard mention of dif-



ferences of opinion within the ranks of the General Zionists, and it has not been denied. Doesn't the majority decision of the faction overshadow the personal uncertainties of MK Bernstein and his colleagues who are of like opinion?...

I wouldn't think of passing judgement in this way were it not for the all-encompassing nature of this particular faction's approach, and for the call of inducement that went out to all its members to get up and come here, lest, God forbid, someone should neglect to come and stay at home with a clear conscience....

The general sensation of "the wrath of the masses" surrounding this debate, organized by runners and messengers and riders on their mechanical mounts, accompanied by noisy competition between the parties, leaves a bad taste. The impression gained is that not everyone is motivated by altruism, and doubt creeps in as to whether there are political factors and narrow sectarian groups at work here.

**Haim Boger (General Zionist):** And your intentions are altruistic? You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Y. Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi):** If the intention is indeed altruistic, then why should those who are opposed be interested in representing the proponents as seeking reconciliation with the the Germans? What use is there in putting words in our mouths which are not ours and interpreting them incorrectly? What is to be gained by the elimination of any chance of payment or by lessening its scope? Does this not have any implication for the strengthening of our position externally? Those who are in favor of the move to return the property plundered from our brothers and our fathers, even if it implies personal contact with representatives of Germany, have explicitly stated that this claim is in no way a step towards the obliteration of the ghastly blood-account which we have with the children of this nation of murderers, descendents of Asmodeus [the king of the demons].

**Meir Wilner (Maki):** You are speaking hypocritically.

**Y. Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi):** The Prime Minister and the leaders of the nation have stated time and again that there is eternal hatred between us, refugees from the sword and those who have been saved from Hell, and the German Nazi nation, as well as its various henchmen and accomplices. This pronouncement is a vow for eternity. Our account with the bearers of pagan culture and those who spread its spirit by thought and deed is beyond measure, even though there are some Jews, unrestrained, frivolous and without roots, who sit down to dine with the Germans, and enjoy their bread and their wine, even reaching the point of intermarriage and accepting literary prizes. But these are individuals who will be remembered to their shame. The nation will remember. A nation such as ours will not forget.

Our account is much broader than that, cutting across categories and breaking through boundaries. It is not limited to the boundaries of West Germany. East and West were united in satanic crime, blood-letting and destruction, theft and plunder, the torture and murder of babes-in-arms. And who has the right to separate that which is joined together and to make the contaminated pure, and what are the moral and logical grounds for doing so? The attitude of the members of Maki and Mapam, those who make pilgrimage to East Berlin, and who differentiate geographically between this and that Germany, is fundamentally and totally unacceptable to us. It is the result of general, alien, political considerations and not of feelings welling up from a Jewish heart, nor is it even guided or directed by concern for our enterprise and anxiety for its success.

**M. Wilner (Maki):** We sit here philosophizing while people are being killed outside.

**Beba Idelson (Mapai):** What are you so excited about? You brought them here.

**The Speaker, Joseph Sprinzak:** I must ask the Members of the Knesset not to disturb.

**Y. Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi):** This approach is alien to us. The mantle of fighters for the honor of the nation does not suit those people, is not cut to their proportions. Those who blacken the name of Israel in far-away, foreign forums must not be turned all at once into protectors of its honor. Those who removed the Holy Name from the Book of Books without flinching and without shame should be ashamed to pretend to be zealots for the legacy of their forefathers. No one will believe them. This is another clear symptom of an important creative and constructive national force descending into the abyss of the criminal, self-denying *Yevsekzia* [NKVD section dealing with Jewish affairs]. (Shouts from MK Wilner and MK Vilenska.)

**The Speaker, J. Sprinzak:** I must insist that MKs Wilner and Vilenska desist. We shall get the correct information. You have already given out unauthorized information.

I am only able to determine the fact that stones have been thrown into the Knesset chamber, and that the Knesset Guard did not fire. I ask that the Knesset members remain seated. (Shouts from all sides of the House.)

**Y. Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi):** I can empathize with the negators in so far as it is honest, pure and consistent, even while I take issue with their practical considerations. While there is much justice in the arguments presented at the outset by the proponents, who demand the return of Jewish property to us, the legal heirs, and regard the claiming of this in-

heritance and its removal from the hands of the enemy as a religious obligation, there is still room for qualms and hesitation. Were it not for the extensive needs of the people, the serious financial difficulties involved in executing the tasks which have been thrust upon us, it is doubtful whether even the most enthusiastic of the proponents would be happy to have direct contact with the representatives of Germany, which entails much potential danger and requires extreme caution. And it is a very painful thing that the appreciation of these needs and their extent is what determines that the decision be in the positive. The burden of obligation which we are pleased to shoulder is extremely heavy. The upbuilding of the country requires both physical and spiritual sacrifice. The ingathering of the exiles has only just begun and we must not slow down its pace. The Jewish dispersions, groaning in their suffering, in a state of decline and in danger of extinction, cry out to be saved. Hundreds of thousands of our Jewish brethren are awaiting immediate salvation, but the extent of the immigration shrinks before our very eyes due to a lack of funds as well as the means with which to provide medical treatment for Jewish children in anticipation of their immigration. Poverty and privation frustrate the execution of the rescue plans. And it should be said openly that if we had the ready change in our pockets, we could even blow open the exit gates which currently close upon fine, healthy, loyal, pioneering young people who guard the embers of our nation lest they die out, and who yearn for the day of redemption which is to come.

Anyone who has seen Jewish children in the ghettos of Tehran and Isfahan, Casablanca and Marrakesh, in the southern villages of Tunisia and Algeria, rotting away from hunger, filthy and dying from lack of care knows, and must attest to the fact, that their rescue must come first, especially as it relates to the upbuilding and development of the country. And the hardship faced by our brethren here in the homeland, living in torn tents for lack of permanent housing, in the cold and the flooding rain without warm clothing—shall we view them with indifference? I attentively read the Order of the Day of the Herut institutions in preparation for the "Pilgrimage to Jerusalem" in which the "servicemen" who have been recruited for the Day of the Emergency are told, "Those who travel should prepare warm clothing," and I was very touched by the true concern which Herut shows for its party activists. But are we in any way exempt from expanding this concern to include others, the children of the *maabarot* [tent camps] and the infants in ripped tents and the old people in those camps who suffer from the cold? And not only on one Day of Emergency, but on many such days. And one's heart breaks many times over at the realization that, in these great days, in the generation of the resurrection, in the period of the redemption, in this opportune time, the spirit of that part of this great nation dwelling in the tranquil parts of the Diaspora was not able to meet

the challenge of fully committing all of its resources to the aid of the nation and to the rebuilding of its homeland, so that we can carry on our shoulders the burden which has been thrust upon us. And if our people does not give us what we absolutely need, and if the nations of the world only help us a little bit, and we are knocking on locked gates to request assistance and understanding, should we also give up that which is ours by right, which was taken from us by force? The hour requires it. We shall overcome doubt and hesitation, even when some innermost feeling holds us back. We shall stand up forcefully and shall loudly, clearly claim that which is ours. We shall make demands of West Germany and press our claim against East Germany, whose conqueror—the Soviet Union—has to this day not even seen fit to reply to our note stating our claim. The goal on behalf of which we shall claim our brothers' legacy is a most sacred one; the needs to which it will be applied are lofty ones.

I do not join in the refrain, "...remove the beam from your own eye," voiced by the proponents of negotiation with regard to those who are opposed to it, seemingly as a complaint against those individuals and companies, kibbutzim, and organizations which brought in goods and machinery from Germany at the time. The thousands of immigrants from Germany, the remnants of the Holocaust, brought precious little with them, and what they did bring was brought legally; it belonged to them. The tools, machinery, workshops, and medical equipment which were brought out of Germany by individuals and groups can be put to great use here, and it is a good thing that they brought them. "And they despoiled the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:36) was not only a matter of the moment, but applied to all times. This is not even a fraction of one percent of the Jewish property and the value of our brothers' labor which has gone down into oblivion. Even that which we are now claiming as a body, as a state, as the representatives of the nation, is nothing more than a small part of what we should rightfully receive. And those who will present the claim in our name and will determine in practice the ways in which the reparations are made and the form they will take, will kindly see to it that the period of time during which we have to have contact with the Germans is kept to a minimum as much as possible. And if we must receive the reparations in the form of goods and industrial products, then they should choose those things which we ourselves need, so that we do not become the distributors of German goods among the nations. We shall demand materials and manufactured goods which do not imply the subordination of our industry to German spare parts. Germany has things which it can give us which will involve a one-time transaction. We need raw materials, chemicals, iron pipes, steel sheets, lumber for construction, prefabricated housing, etc., all things which are essential to the country's development and the creation

of a foundation for its industry and which do not involve any long-term trade with Germany.

The tone in which the negotiations are conducted is also important. We shall appear as plaintiffs, as the members of a victorious nation, imbued with national pride, because the very fact of our existence as a people after the bloodbath is our outstanding victory. I am convinced that we should send people to these talks who are not originally from Germany, people who will speak to them through an interpreter. It is desirable that people who themselves experienced the Holocaust be included in the delegation; they will know what to say and how to say it, and will be able to demonstrate our commonly-held intention: to demand restitution without showing any signs of conciliation and forgiveness. We shall charge our government with the adoption of the steps required in order to salvage the maximum possible, under the conditions, from the flames and the lions, and it will carry out that task with the self-consciousness and the national pride befitting the government of a sovereign state which is just now for the first time tasting the taste of its independence and which speaks in the name of the state as well as in the name of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, whose major organizations have granted it their full support.

**Menachem Begin (Herut):** Honorable Knesset members. On 13 March 1951, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Sharett read out to us the note which he had sent to America, England, France and Russia, regarding what he called reparations from Germany.

During the debate, I attempted to share with the members of the Knesset the tremendous shock which I felt when I read the following sentence: "There can be no progress towards the restitution of Germany's honor as a nation within the family of nations, as long as the matter of reparations to the Jewish people is not arranged." These words are not open to interpretation. They are perfectly clear: they state that if the matter of the compensation of the Jews by Germany is taken care of, then, in the opinion of the Government of Israel, the restitution of Germany's honor as a nation within the family of nations would indeed be possible.

My dear opponents, at that time you made noise, you erupted like a volcano, you disturbed and you accused me of accusing him of being prepared to enter into negotiations with Germany. The venerable Rabbi Nurock made the Foreign Minister swear that he would not commit the "national crime" of contact with the Germans. And behold, the government is about to go to Nazi Bonn. Mr. Ben-Gurion, sir, you were the one who reproached a Member of the Knesset for having gone to Berlin, and you said: "You went to Nazi Berlin?" Bonn isn't Nazi? Doesn't the theory that West Germany is good and East Germany is bad, lead to the theory that West Germany is democratic while East Germany is Nazi?...

Perhaps you will say that the government of Adenauer is a new German government, not a Nazi one. You must know who this Adenauer is. I ask you: In which concentration camp was he when Hitler ruled Germany, into which prison was he thrown as a result of the bloody regime of the Nazis? I ask you: Who are Mr. Adenauer's assistants? You reply: About half the people in Adenauer's Foreign Ministry are members of the Nazi Party. With them you will hold discussions—with the "specialists" of Ribbentrop, with the "specialists" of Weizsaecker, with the assassins who laid the groundwork for the destruction of millions of our brethren by telling the world that information about the persecution of the Jews was nothing more than "atrocities propaganda."

You may say that with this government, which is prepared to give back part of the property, we can negotiate because it is not responsible for the murder. I will remind you of facts. Sixteen million Germans voted for Hitler before he came to power. There were twelve million communists and socialists in Germany. Where did they disappear to? There were twelve million soldiers in the Germany army, millions in the Gestapo, in the SA and in the SS. Millions. From a Jewish point of view, there is not a single German who is not a Nazi, nor is there a single German who is not a murderer. And from them you are going to get money?

You have an argument: If we don't go to them to get this property, then it will remain in the hands of the thief. Indeed, the figures have already been published. You hope for a maximum of three hundred million dollars in German Nazi goods. You estimated the stolen Jewish property at six billion dollars, which means that you are going to get 5 percent of the stolen Jewish property, while leaving 95 percent of the stolen Jewish property in the hands of the murderous thief. The difference lies in the fact that if you don't go to Bonn, the property remains "stolen" and Israel's claim still stands; but if you do go to Bonn, and sign an agreement with Nazi Germany—by virtue of your agreement, of your signatures, you will announce in the name of the entire Jewish people, in the name of the millions of murdered, that it is proper that 95 percent of the Jewish property remain in the hands of the murderer, the thief. Who appointed you to do this? Who gave you the right to do it? Those who are no longer here gave you the authority to speak for them?

From whom are you going to claim the property? Let me present a simple example: Shimon sets fire to the house of Ruben's father and Ruben's father dies in the fire. What can Ruben do? He might forego the house, since his father burned to death in it. Or he might go to the court, declare himself a litigant and demand that he be compensated for the cost of the house, on the basis of a court decision. But in which barbaric tribe would you find him turning directly to the murderer and demanding compensation for the house from him? Whereas you, bereaved chil-

dren orphaned of your parents, you go directly to the murderer. Not to demand the "ransom" as you put it but rather to get, as it were, the value of the house which was burned down, with your fathers in it. In what barbaric tribe would you find such an abomination. What are you trying to make of the Jewish people, a people which has been civilized and has taught others to be civilized for some four thousand years.

You built the foundation for the negotiations with Germany upon the message of Mr. Sharett.

But there is yet another foundation of the bridge which Mr. Sharett crossed from Jewish Jerusalem to Nazi Bonn, i.e., the statement of Mr. Adenauer himself. You deserve to have this statement read to you in the original, in the language of the doers of evil, through whose services Mr. Adenauer is negotiating with you, but as long as the fateful decision is not yet taken—fateful not only for me but for all of us, not only for years but for generations—the honor of this House is dear to me and I will therefore read the statement in Hebrew. This is what Herr Adenauer says: I declare that the vast majority of the German people had no part in these crimes. He also stated that the German government is prepared to work together with the representatives of the Jewish people and the Government of Israel to solve the problem of making amends, or in his contaminated language, *wieder gutmachen* [For the material aspect of the problem], in order to ease the way for a spiritual cleaning of the slate of the guilt for untold suffering.

A member of the Knesset has accused both Mr. Sharett, and yourself, Mr. Ben-Gurion, of having this statement in your possession before Mr. Adenauer revealed it to his Nazi advisors. If this is true, woe unto us! You read it; you accepted, as a basis of the negotiations with the Germans, the suggestion that the majority of the German people were revolted by these crimes and took no part in them. You accepted, as a basis of the negotiations, a statement according to which this money would be given to you *zur veelischen Reinigung eines unendlichen Leidens* [For the spiritual cleansing of unending suffering]. If you didn't read it, how could Mr. Sharett consider it as a basis for negotiation? And if you did read and approve it—then let the Jewish people know upon what sort of base the bridge between Hebrew Jerusalem and the Nazi Bonn government was erected. Adenauer's note has been read by millions of Germans, millions of Americans, millions of Frenchmen; it has penetrated the hearts of the non-Jews. All the nations of the world knew that that was the basis upon which we were to receive the money, as a "payment for unending suffering." How they will bemoan us, how they will despise us! What have you made of us? Your demurrers will be written in Hebrew—who will read them? The nations will see only one thing: you sat down at the table with the murderers of your people, you acknowledged that they are capable of signing an agreement, that they

are capable of keeping an agreement, that they are a nation, a nation among the family of nations.

The non-Jews not only hated us, not only murdered us, not only burned us, not only envied us—primarily they despised us. And in this generation which we refer to as the last of slavery/the first approaching redemption—in the generation in which we achieved respectability, in which we went from slavery to freedom—you would deprive us, for a few million filthy dollars, for some tainted goods, of the little honor which we have managed to achieve. You will probably establish a firm called "Ger-Pal"—short for "Germany-Palestine"—to distribute German goods in France, in England, in America; you will become Nazi agents for the distribution of Nazi goods. How they will despise us when a Jew, the emissary of the Government of Israel, standing in his shop in Argentina, will call out: come and buy, this is good stuff, "Made in Germany." By doing this you are destroying the very foundation under our feet, you are jeopardizing our honor and our independence. How they will despise us!

And what is the international background to all this? Our talented Ambassador in America has referred to "Germany in renewal." Certainly, Germany is in renewal. Five million from this one and 25 million from that one. Its industry is flourishing. Nineteen million tons of steel per annum—these are the achievements of "Germany in renewal." Churchill devoted half his book to a description of the blindness and stupidity which led to the rearmament of Germany and to World War II. Today, he himself stands at the head of the parade on behalf of German rearmament. Out of blindness, out of terrible fear, they are returning to the teutonic wolfpack the very teeth and claws which had been removed. Are we going to be party to this? We are going to say that they are a nation, that they are capable of negotiation, that they will keep an agreement which America or England will sign?

Mr. Ben-Gurion, Sir! If instead of talking about the bankruptcy of American Zionists you would summon the Jews of America to propagandize among the American people regarding the danger to America itself inherent in the rearming of this wolfpack—then the situation might be different. Were this great Jewry to rise up and say: Germany shall not be rearmed—the situation might have been different. Then it might have still been possible to prevent this tragedy. But you became friends with the assimilated Jews and as for them, their wealth was always in inverse proportion to their courage and their loyalty to Zion. One of the leaders of the assimilated Jews has said: If the Government has decided to rearm Germany, well its none of our business." These are your partners.

Woe unto us, for we see, five years after the end of the war, how the Nazi murderer has arisen, how he takes up his weapon. At the moment,

he still speaks softly to the Americans and the French; soon, when he feels his strength, he will make his real voice heard.

Therefore, I will conclude my remarks with a number of appeals. First, to you Mr. Ben-Gurion, Sir. I turn to you not as an opponent—as such, there is an abyss between us, there is no bridge nor will there be a bridge, we are separated by a bloody abyss. I turn to you in the zero hour as one Jew to another, as the son of an orphaned nation, as the son of a bereaved nation: Stop! Do not go through with this. This is the abomination of abominations in Israel; there has never been anything comparable to it since we became a people. I am trying to give you a way out. As my adversary, I would not provide you with it; as a Jew, I do so: Go to the people, a referendum. Not because I suggest that you call for a popular vote on this issue; I don't think that it is even possible to vote upon it. The vote has already been taken—at Treblinka, Auschwitz, Ponary, there the Jews voted under the torture of death—not to have contact, not to negotiate with the Germans. Go to the people.

You don't have a majority in this matter in the Knesset. Members of your own party are opposed—and I am proud that Jews, even if they are my opponents, even though they hate me, are opposed to these unholy negotiations. Part of the Poalei-Mizrachi party is opposed, part of the Mizrachi is opposed, part of the Agudath Yisrael is opposed. In fact, you are in the minority. So what have you done? You used force, you frightened Mr. Pinkas into thinking that he would be removed from this chair and transferred to another....

**David Zvi Pinkas, Minister of Transport:** Don't talk rubbish. Nobody frightens me. Not even Begin can frighten me, with all his heroics.

**M. Begin (Herut):** Go to the people. And if the people should say yes, possibly one cannot escape the conclusion that: "Surely the people is grass" [Isaiah 40], and maybe all the sacrifices were not worth it. But then you can say: The people is behind me, 51 percent of the nation is prepared to negotiate with them. But if the people says nay—you will not lose. For you are a democrat. You will bow your head before the wishes of the people. Why take it upon yourself to make the decision here. You do not have a majority. And this is the way out. In God's name, I ask you to take council with yourself, stop, place the matter before the entire nation—and may He have pity.

My second appeal is to those Members of Knesset elected by Arab constituencies. Far be it from me to deprive them of their formal right to vote. They have equal rights. I believe in equal rights, I believe in the actualization of the vision of the leader of Betar [Revisionist Party], our great teacher: "Here he will be satiated with plenty and with happiness, the Arab child, the child of Nazareth and my child, for my banner, the banner of purity and honesty, will purify both banks of my Jordan." You have the formal right to participate in this vote, but you should differen-

tiate between the formal right and the moral right. This is our issue, the blood of our mothers, our brothers and our sisters is mixed up in it, let us decide in this matter....

My third appeal is to the members of the religious parties. This was not the issue on which you fought the election. You contested the election in the name of the religion of Israel, the Torah of Israel. What connection is there between the Torah of Israel and negotiations with Amalek? For by this vote you will wipe off an entire verse which has been sanctified by the Torah: The Lord will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages [Ex. 17:16]. How can the Lord fight Amalek if you, the defenders of the religion, vote for peace with Amalek, for receiving money from Amalek?

Today is the Tenth of Tevet, a Commemoration Day for us all, both the memorial day for my father and the memorial day for the entire nation. (Noise in the Hall, shouts from the Mapam benches.) I stand here before you, members of the religious parties, as a believing Jew, son of a believer, and plead with you: Do not do this thing. Coalition, opposition, man's life is a passing thing, how much more so the life of a coalition. How come that you didn't see it? Last year you split away on the issue of enlisting girls into the army, but on this issue you are not prepared to say nay? Counsel with your consciences, with your belief. How will the Jewish youth believe in the religion of Israel when its spokesmen/representatives raise their hands in favor of negotiations with Germany?

So, at this last moment, take counsel, caucus, sit and discuss the matter, have pity upon this people, do not give your support to this abomination which is unparalleled in our history ever since the incident of the concubine on the hill [Judges 19].

And now Members of Knesset from all of the sides, I have come to the end of my speech. I know that this is a turning point in the history of our people. I also know what awaits me and my colleagues, and I say to them....

**Moshe Shapira, Minister of the Interior:** What is going on outside, is that the Jewish way? And you appeal to us!

**M. Begin (Herut):** I say, there shall be no negotiations with Germany. There shall be no negotiations with Germany! You have claimed that the fury is "staged" but I have here a list: Rabbi Maimon, Rabbi Mordechai Nurok, Prof. Klausner, David Shimoni, Asher Barash, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Dr. Dvoretzky, Yaakov Cohen, Abraham Sutzkever—That is staged fury? If it only were staged....

(The session was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. and reconvened at 9:35 p.m.)

**The Speaker, Joseph Sprinzak:** I hereby reconvene this session of the Knesset. I was forced to adjourn the session as MK Begin refused to re-

tract an insulting expression which he used in reference to the Prime Minister. I have the honor of informing the House that MK Begin has made a retraction regarding his insult to the Prime Minister and the sentence in which he said that if he can't speak, then no one will speak.

I wish to take this opportunity to say—and I believe that I speak for all the Members—that I am very sorry about what transpired during the speeches of MK Rafael and MK Begin, and about the shouts which violated the honor of the Knesset. And I appeal to the Members: we still have a harsh and penetrating debate ahead of us and we must maintain our composure and the honor of this House at least from within, so as to enable the Knesset to complete its deliberations whatever the result may be—with honor and in a manner befitting the Parliament of Israel and its members.

**M. Begin (Herut):** I accept the announcement of the Honorable Speaker of the Knesset; I do so not as a result of pressure or threats to have me removed from the Hall—leaving the Knesset would be easy for me under the present circumstances—I accept it because I still have a function to fulfill here, possibly my last, and I intend to fulfill it completely.

In 1919 a tragedy occurred in a Jewish city, a small city but very significant in the Jewish world, a city called Pinsk. An anti-Semitic Polish general took 34 Jews whom he suspected of being Bolsheviks, stood them against a wall and murdered them. I was a youth then. I was taught a song about that murder. I do not remember all of the words but one sentence I do remember: "It is better that you not come to the Seder table." The world was different then and it was very much shaken by the murder of 34 Jews. Morgenthau came from America; a Committee of Investigation was sent from Britain; the Polish Government—half anti-Semitic and half not—set up a Parliamentary Committee of Investigation and behold on the basis of the decision of that Parliamentary Committee, the Polish Government offered to compensate the bereaved families for what had happened to their fathers and brothers. And the Polish Government was not directly responsible for the murder. General Lezansky did what he did of his own accord. The Polish Government disassociated itself from the murder and offered the families compensation. And then, according to the book in front of me, the Zionist Committee of the town came together, called all the families involved and told them: "If [you] take compensation [you] will be sinning against the memory of the saintly ones and [you] will be a disgrace; it will be said that the Jews sold the souls of the saintly ones for money." Then and there, a protocol was drawn up in which it was emphasized that they would not sell the spilled blood for money and that only by punishing the murderers for their evil doing could the sin be atoned for. The protocol was signed by the heads of the families and was sent to the War Ministry and that is how the matter ended.

Now what was understood by the Zionist Committee in the city of Pinsk cannot be understood by the government in the State of Israel? What was understood by the Zionist Committee in the city of Pinsk cannot be understood by the Hebrew Parliament? For if, after you yourselves sign a mutual agreement with the Germans, you would succeed in getting them to sign a statement such as: We the Germans who murdered six million Jews hereby give you three hundred million dollars over ten years, while agreeing that you shall continue to hate us, as we are guilty of the murder of six million, and we do not ask you for atonement—even if you could get them to sign such a statement, even then the fact would remain that you are still accepting money directly from the murderers on the basis of a mutual agreement and based upon compromise. You demanded such and such, they refuse to give the entire sum and offer less, you agree. And agreement will be signed, in front of everyone, with the murderers—this can only be ransom.

I intended to warn you and I am doing so: Members of Knesset of all parties, this cannot pass. If there is any meaning to the term "Sanctification of God's Name," if there is any substance to the phrase "rather to die than transgress"—then this is where they apply.... This may be my last speech in the Knesset and I can do no other than say very straightforward things which come straight from a heart drunk with blood—perhaps these words will enter your hearts. For three years we have sat with you in the Knesset, as a minority. You were the majority. You were an elected majority and we accepted that. We did not come to the Knesset from a rich home, from a life of pleasure. My colleagues and I came here in the aftermath of a war which lasted many years. We were ruthlessly persecuted, we were not left in peace, a price was set upon our heads, detectives were looking for us throughout the country, we endangered ourselves 24 times a day. We succeeded, the oppressor withdrew, the state was established on a part of the divided homeland, the time came for the elections. But there was one more event before the elections. Mr. Ben-Gurion will remember it. He gave the order to shoot at me with a cannon. I stood on the deck of a burning ship, I saw my comrades, my men, my disciples killed: they held machine guns, mortars, rifles, but I gave the order not to respond and they heeded me. In this Knesset, in the course of three years, how many decisions have you taken which have made our blood boil. After each such decision, we went out covered in shame, greatly saddened that we had perhaps not succeeded in our mission. And after those decisions we went, my colleagues and I, to that youth whom you vilify while they risk their lives for their people and their country; they gave their lives, twelve of them were executed with the words of Hatikvah [the national anthem] on their lips to the last—I went to this youth, accustomed to war, battle-wise, and I said to them: this is our parliament, this is our government. The majority will decide, let us go to the people and try to convince them. If we

do not succeed—what more can we do? This is our people. After that I went to the Diaspora, I met with thousands of Jews—they are my witnesses, they will confirm what I say—and I said to them: This government is a different government, a Jewish government. Our government, my government—that is what I said to the Jews of America, Argentina, Mexico—no matter what its composition. That is how we have educated our youth. We accepted everything even though our souls were raging. We wanted to educate this nation to statehood, freedom, independence, to a normal life after two thousand years of exile. Don't we have children too? Don't we have wives? Don't we also deserve a quiet family life? Don't we also have the right to live as free citizens in this state? For we have certainly given our all for its establishment. We were given nothing: neither command nor army nor police nor government nor any office—nothing! We came to you with the request that with respect to rights you recognize those fighters as soldiers—and you refused; for two years you refused. The Prime Minister said that as long as this government is in office, it will not give a penny to them—leg-amputees, arm-amputees, invalids for life, bereaved families, poor, shattered. We also accepted that. We once more approached those young people and said: we will still get them to change their minds, we will convince them; never mind, it is our country.

That is how I trained those young people. That is what I learned from my "father" and mentor [Jabotinsky]. But there was another thing which I learned from him, which I also passed on: there are things in life which are dearer than life itself. There are things in life which are worse than death itself. And this is one of those things for which we will give our lives. We will leave our families, we shall bid our friends farewell but there will not be negotiations with Germany.

Nations worthy of that name took to the barricades for much smaller things. On this matter—we, a part of the last generation of slavery and the first generation of the redemption, who saw our fathers dragged into the gas chambers, who heard the clattering of the wheels of the death trains, who before our very eyes saw the ancient father thrown into the river along with five hundred Jews from the glorious town of Bresk in Lithuania and the river turned red from blood, who before our very eyes saw the old mother murdered in the hospital, before whose very eyes there occurred all those events, unparalleled in history—should we hesitate to endanger our lives in order to prevent negotiations with the murderers of our fathers? We should hide our faces in shame if we did not rise up. We are prepared for everything, anything, just to prevent this shame from falling upon Israel. I hope that we will prevent it.

In Zion Square, before the 15,000 Jews who gathered there outraged, in the rain and cold, I said: Go, stand around the Knesset. Do not disturb the proceedings. All those lies, as though we intended to disrupt the debate—rubbish! I said: Go, surround the Knesset as, in the days of Rome,

when a Roman Governor wanted to put a statue in the Temple, the Jews were alerted from all over the country and they surrounded the Temple and said: Over our dead bodies shall you pass. I said: let your silence scream out, for there shall be no negotiation with Germany. They attacked them with gas bombs made in Germany and that is when it occurred. [Stones were thrown into the Knesset chamber—N.L.]

And I say to you: Gentlemen, Woe unto me that I have come to this; happy am I that I was thus privileged! There are still youth in Israel. No, this youth does not desire war; it does not desire battle or death; this youth wants to live, it has the right to live. But the hour has come when all is in the balance. Shall we not fulfill this religious imperative. We shall!

This is my final appeal to the Knesset: prevent a holocaust. The voice of Satan is heard in the depths of Hell—consider what he has achieved in addition to the devastation which he wrought in his lifetime? Spill Jewish blood over German money! What for? The money will be used up, will eventually disappear, but the shame will remain.

I know that you have power. You have jails, concentration camps, army, police, detectives, cannons, machine guns. Never mind. Over this issue all that power will be shattered like glass on a rock. For this just cause we will fight to the end. Physical power in such cases is of no value; it is vain deceit.

I warn, but I do not threaten. Whom should I threaten? I know that you will drag us away to a concentration camp. Today you arrested hundreds. Perhaps you will arrest thousands. It is nothing. They will go along, they will sit there and we will sit with them. If necessary—we will be killed together with them. But there will be no reparations from Germany. And may God help us all to prevent this holocaust for the sake of our future and our honor.

Will the Speaker be so kind as to put it in the record and to inform the proper authorities that, as of 4:00 p.m. today, I, a Member of the Knesset entitled to parliamentary immunity, hereby consider that immunity null and void.

**Pinchas Lavon (Mapai):** Mr. Speaker, Members of the Knesset. Today we have been witness to one of the worst things to have happened in the history of our young state, I allow myself to say...even in the history of our people: a calculated attempt—the conclusion of MK Begin's speech leaves no doubt that it was calculated and prepared—to mount an attack upon the only sanctuary which the Jewish people has in our day, its Parliament. There have been times in our history when the sanctuary was put to the flame by foreign adversaries. It shall be recorded in the short history of Israel that a criminal attempt to intimidate the elected representatives of the nation through physical terror, and thus to prevent them from carrying out their duties, an attempt—intended but happily foiled—to do something similar to the burning of the Reichstag, was

made by Jews, in the name of the "honor" of the Jewish people and of "Jewish History."

We have heard a pronouncement made which, if it was made seriously, is of great significance. It is an announcement of intended rebellion against the State of Israel. We heard it proclaimed: This shall not be, because I will not allow it. We heard a challenge to the freedom and independence of the State of Israel. We heard a proclamation which takes us back to the days in which a gang, whatever their motives, could impose its will upon the state through brute force. This proclamation, this deed...tell us that the young republic of Israel is in danger. Irrespective of the question of reparations, the decisive question for all of us remains: How are we to live in this state and how are things to be decided—by the will of armed sheikhs or freely, as a free nation...freely or at pistol-point? I say "pistol-point" advisedly. I must say that these gentlemen are currently involved in incitement to murder. If you read the written word and the speeches—there can be no other possible interpretation.

At this time, we have a primary obligation: to bring together all those faithful to the state in order to eradicate this danger at the root. May I be permitted to address one sentence to Mr. Begin: you are too small to threaten the State of Israel. It has many enemies who are stronger than itself and it is possible that it may not be able to cope with all of them and that you will be able to sow havoc and create agitation, but the State of Israel does have enough strength to deal with the source of this anarchy.

The Knesset will decide on this matter under discussion, and whatever it decides, that is what will be. Boastful arrogance may cause suffering and insult but it can not effect this basic fact in the slightest. For once we make concessions on this basic principle, we will have relinquished the very existence and future of the state.

With respect to the discussion at hand, we heard a very comprehensive explanation by MK Rimalt of the irrational and the rational forces at work in man's soul. I think that he will agree with me that this is not a very revolutionary thesis in the year 1952, but I would submit two amendments to MK Rimalt's basic assumptions. The one is that we cannot be divided into those who are totally rational and those who are totally irrational. Emotion is common to all and no one holds a monopoly on it. An hysterical scream does not always reflect true emotion or deep pain. We are all feeling people and we are all people in whom reason functions nonetheless.

I would like him to accept another amendment as well...When we gather here to debate an issue, it will not suffice to invoke the taboo that the issue is irrational and consequently my stand is sacred, so don't touch me, and let us not discuss the matter nor bring relevant argu-

ments. No, MK Rimalt, with due respect to your feelings and to mine, we must discuss the matter rationally.

I must tell the honorable MKs: There has been and certainly will continue to be, a great deal of competition among the speakers over the description of the atrocities of Auschwitz, Maidanek, etc., with everyone speaking in the name of the father, the child, the mother, etc.

**Yohanán Bader (Herut):** There will be those who attempt to put it out of mind.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Gentlemen, by what moral Jewish right do you monopolize the six million slaughtered, in favor of a specific position? By what right? Did they give you permission? Did they tell you what they think? Who is to decide? The living decide.

**Haim Landau (Herut):** The living also determine whether to sell the dead.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** The living decide according to their considerations, their understanding, according to their sense of loyalty to humanity and to the nation. We, the living. And when I say that it is we the living who decide, I do not differentiate or assign greater privilege to anyone, neither to the partisan nor to the soldiers in the army, for the living partisan did not receive a testament from the dead partisan telling him what to do in this respect. And the same applies to the soldier.

**Shoshanna Persitz (General Zionists):** And who did?

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** No one. We must debate this matter as a living nation, with responsibility towards the past, the present and the future of Jewish life in its entirety.

**Arieh Altman (Herut):** And that is appropriate to the past of this nation?

**Israel Bar-Yehudah (Mapam):** The future lies in Bonn.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** I will get to that too.

**Y. Bader (Herut):** I know that you will get to Bonn.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** The Zionist movement has been faced many times with very serious questions regarding relationships with hostile nations, enemies and foes. Before the establishment of the Zionist movement, the Jewish way was simple: outwardly pleading, while inwardly satisfying our feelings of Jewishness by creating prayers, by proscriptions, rejection, etc., etc. There was a value to the prayers, and a great value to the proscriptions and rejection because in the life of a helpless nation these were moral and spiritual weapons of the first order.

And since the founding of the Zionist movement, from the very outset, it has been faced with this problem: how to fashion the relationships between the as-yet-stateless Jewish people, desirous of sovereignty and



the other nations and its enemies? Then came the Herzl-Plehve [Russian Minister of the Interior] incident—the harsh argument over this issue is well remembered. And now, decades later—it may be possible to summarize it by saying that while in a practical sense Herzl was mistaken, from the political-historical viewpoint it is very possible that he was right, as his action gave expression to the budding awareness of the great change in these interrelationships resulting from the fact that instead of individual communities there was now a Zionist movement aspiring to a sovereign existence.

**Eliezer Shostak (Herut):** How does this relate to the money?

**Meir Argov (Mapai):** Wait and see. Begin arranged a pogrom. Let Lavon talk and you will hear.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** There was another incident, I don't remember whether in 1921 or 1922, the agreement between Jabotinsky and Slavinsky, the representative of Petlyura [Ukrainian government-in-exile], the agreement made by the "father and mentor" [Jabotinsky] of the one who is "shaken to the depths of his soul."

**Y. Hazan (Mapam):** And how did the people relate to it?

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Wait. I will get to the point at which you will have the opportunity to interfere.

The agreement was signed two years after the slaughter of hundreds of thousands in the Ukraine—and hundreds of thousands was at that time a ghastly figure for the Jews of Russia. They were perhaps not slaughtered as systematically as in Hitler's system, but very thoroughly indeed. The agreement was not signed with an Adenauer, it was signed with the leader of the butchers. It was not an agreement on reparations—it was an agreement on cooperation and mutual help.

**Shemuel Mikunis (Maki):** This is in effect the same agreement.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** If there were any measure of historic decency in our life, then it is precisely the disciples of the maker of that agreement who should be talking about the present situation in minor tones.

**Y. Bader (Herut):** Everything would be fine if this were all true.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** The Jewish public rightly rejected that agreement. And there is an interesting document which, if we read it after having heard the speech of Mr. Begin, we would not think that 30 years have passed since then at all. When the signee was called before the Zionist Executive to explain his actions, he said: As for the agreement between myself and Slavinsky, the relations between him and the Steering Committee didn't interest me then, and don't interest me now, and I had no intention of taking the latter's opinion into consideration, neither as a member of the Executive nor as a private citizen.

**E. Shostak (Herut):** That was not an agreement on reparations payments.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** If we were to change a few words in this statement, then we would have, to all intents and purposes, a copy of Begin's statement here. "It is not of interest nor is it important to me, and from 4:00 p.m. on, I utterly disregard my right to immunity, but take heed: me, myself and I will not allow it!" History is repeating itself and apparently with rather boring exactitude.

Then there was a third very serious incident which also split the Yishuv [Jewish population in Palestine] and the Zionist movement. This was when the Nazis first rose to power, when the question of the "transfer" was to be decided. Most of us still remember that incident. It seems to me that a number of the figures who took part in this drama also took part in that one. But it is not only a matter of personalities; if we compare the speeches of then and now, we will find that there is no argument brought today which wasn't brought then. They said that it was an abomination, selling the honor of Israel for monetary gains, enabling Hitler to enter international society. And to them it was obvious that Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and Ribbentrop's agreement with Molotov were a direct result of the "transfer" which was arranged to salvage Jewish property. Almost twenty years have passed since then and we can ask ourselves a simple question: assuming for a minute that we went the way of negation, and the property which was salvaged had remained in the hands of Hitler's destruction machine and we hadn't been able to absorb the German immigration which was to become the cornerstone in the upbuilding of the Yishuv....

**Y. Bader (Herut):** That is not true. The money was brought in in a different way.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** ...Whom would we have helped by doing that? Hitler or the Jewish people? The decision was not easy for any one of us. We did it because the spark which was kindled within the Zionist movement developed into a flaming awareness of the centrality of the Land of Israel in the life of the Jewish people, of sovereign responsibility even before the state was actually ours. This was a positive historic awareness, which built up Jewish strength, the strength of the Jewish population.

**S. Mikunis (Maki):** Did the "transfer" really build up Jewish strength?

**H. Landau (Herut):** You opened the way for Hitler.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** And while then too they called for the referendum and employed all sorts of stratagems, and intimidated us with generations past and also told us that the very foundations of Jewish morality were crumbling, today we can say—with a clear conscience—that our

decision was a very positive one from the national, political point of view in terms of saving the nation and building up Jewish strength.

In this debate there has been a rather inflationary use of "morality" and "conscience," clearly referring to public morality. This is a point worth looking into. Forgive me for speaking harshly. The point of this discussion is not to say nice things to each other. It seems to me that the opposition in this case represents an alliance of public immorality: the honorable Rabbi Nurok with his special argument and his unique background, joining together with MK Wilner whose condemnation of the Bonn Government stems only from its failure to accept the political will of the Soviet Union. Had Adenauer only accepted the suggestion of Grotewohl [Otto Grotewohl, former Social Democrat, who on 5 October 1949 became the First Prime Minister of the DDR—N.L.] to be elected for at least one year as the Chancellor of a united Germany, MK Wilner would have had to prove, in his newspaper and in his speech, that Herr Adenauer had become a progressive factor. This argument might be decisive for MK Wilner but not for the people of Israel nor the State of Israel.

**Esther Vilenska (Maki):** The determining factor for you is the pressure from Truman.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Please use other arguments. That one is rather boring.

If Rabbi Nurok [Mizrahi] is joined, parliamentarily, by MK Wilner [Maki] and they are both joined by MK Rubin [Mapam] and then by MK Bernstein [General Zionists], then I allow myself to say that this alliance is fundamentally deceitful as it glosses over the unfathomable truth which divides them; the position of each one and the reasoning behind it is diametrically opposed to that of the others, and there is nothing which unites them.

**M. Begin (Herut):** Your alliance with the clericals is also deceitful.

**E. Shostak (Herut):** What is it that connects you with Rabbi Feldman?

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Talking about collusion, it seems to me that in terms of morality and conscience, this is collusion par excellence.

Let us consider the position of Mapam. Simply stated, and leaving out extraneous phraseology...with respect to East Germany, a predetermined attitude of forgiveness even without reparations; regarding West Germany, no contact and no reparations, just a single demand: that they accept the rule of the Cominform. Our attitude towards both East and West Germany is the same: reparations from all but forgiveness for none. Make up your minds: if we accept the theory that every German-born person is a Nazi, then the fact that just recently someone took on a particular color doesn't change anything. If the problem is a Jewish one, then it makes no difference which regime is in power where.

The position which you are attempting to foster has nothing to do with Jewish interests; it is related to a world view, to the socialist philosophy, to a political philosophy, but it has nothing to do with Jewish interests.

It is only a few years since the World War. The Ukrainian nation was educated in the doctrines of the Soviet Union not for three but for almost thirty years. And when the shake-up came, what happened to the Soviet Ukraine? What did the masses of the Ukrainians do?

**Meir Wilner (Maki):** They saved Jews.

**Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (Mapai):** That is a lie.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** The Ukraine was one of the European countries in which the slaughter by the indigenous masses was nearly total. Despite our historical experience, you want us now to accept the theory that if a Christian Socialist of the Adenauer type is a member of the East German government, then he is 'kosher' as are the thousands of Nazis and SS in the various levels of government in the people's democracies; 'kosher' and freed of all obligation. They deserve our unlimited love and prior pardon. But to claim reparations from that part of Germany which is at least willing of its own accord to pay, that is taboo by definition. Why? We are told that if we claim and receive reparations from West Germany, this will bring the German army into the army of Europe. Dear Lord, are you really so naive? Do you think the Jews of this country so naive that they believe that this question of whether the German army will or will not become a part of the greater European army—we do have an opinion on this matter—is really dependent upon the reparations?

**Mordechai Ben-Tov (Mapam):** It means a great deal.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** No, sir, because if it is a matter of finding an alibi for the nations, then Adenauer, having said what he said, even if Israel decides in the negative, the Germans will have achieved the desired effect without having done anything to return that which they plundered....There is a growing competition between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers, a general and all-encompassing competition for the sympathy of the Germans, and the Soviet Union is not far behind in the race. According to your theory the West needs an act of purification for Germany, and that effect (if there is value to an effect) has been achieved by Adenauer's statement; our rejection would only strengthen it. But it is ridiculous to assume that questions central to the international life of this mad, quarrelsome world could be decided by our position in respect to reparations. We can only determine one thing: what is essential to the Jewish people and what is just; what is the State of Israel, as the body responsible for the fate of the nation, entitled and obliged to claim from the German people?

I could understand it if the opposers said: No reparations; only revenge, for the debate would at least be to the point. But all these speeches....

...All I hear here is rhetoric. They say "revenge" with nothing to back it up; they use the word "Amalek" without anyone knowing what the reference is. "Revenge" is a very real thing.

**M. Begin (Herut):** The revenge will be very real.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Don't try to frighten me and the others so much. You know I have a weak heart.

There is a lot of talk of national honor; I am sorry to say that this is also empty talk. "National honor" is only words, a phrase which is easily tossed around. "National honor" demands real input, it is not a matter of artificially boasting of how respectable we are. Honor expresses itself in doing.

**A. Altman (Herut):** The thing to do is not to talk.

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Tell that to your friend Begin.

...  
I want to emphasize: this is the first time in the history of the Jewish people that the murderers feel some compulsion to return at least a part of the plunder. I say: the honor of the nation and its revenge lie in this, that the German people work in order to clothe, to rehabilitate, to cure, and to house masses of immigrants in Israel.

**S. Mikunis (Maki):** You should be ashamed of yourself! They will clothe and rehabilitate you?

**P. Lavon (Mapai):** Revenge and national honor, insofar as the German nation will have to work in order to assist in the economic consolidation of the State of Israel, because the only possible revenge and the only possible national honor are related to the amassing of our strength and all the rest is empty rhetoric. If the entire nation was not destroyed in the Holocaust, and our hope was not utterly destroyed, it is only because of one thing: by virtue of the renaissance of the center of Jewish strength, the State of Israel. We need strength, more and more strength, more and more Jews, a healthier nation, a stronger state, able to withstand the stormy seas, because the historic answer to the designs for the elimination of the Jewish people lies in a healthy nation and a strong state.

We shall approach this claim for reparations with heads held high, as the messengers of the Jewish past, present and future, loyal to the sole truthful voice of Jewish history: healing the wounds, gathering in the exiles, the consolidation of the state and its economic strengthening, and the reconstruction of the nation.

(The session was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.)

8 January 1952 (10 Tevet 5712)

...  
**Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson:** Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of Knesset, I feel obliged to open my remarks with a word of appreciation for those hundreds of boys, loyal and devoted to the State of Israel who, in police uniform, formed a wall around this House and defended its honor and that of the state; their wonderfully proud stand served as a warning to all those who might wish to consider raising a hand against this country's independence.

I have no intention of entering into a debate with the faction responsible for yesterday's scandal. Yesterday, we heard the leader of that faction say, from this very podium, that until now we have existed only by virtue of his grace and that despite the fact that his faction was not pleased with decisions taken by a majority of the Knesset, they nevertheless most graciously granted it their recognition.

**Haim Landau (Herut):** With our blood we created this Knesset for you and we are not seated here as a favor.

**Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson:** Until now, he has graciously kept his boys, his disciples, quiet but yesterday he decided otherwise. We shall know how to protect our independence from the attacks of strangers and if necessary—may it never be so—from internal attack as well. We have the forces to do it.

**H. Landau (Herut):** Again talking about force.

**The Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion:** You will eventually have to give an accounting.

**M. Begin (Herut):** You too, Sir, will have to give an account of your crimes.

**Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson:** I do not intend to argue with the members of Mapam either. For it seems to me that on this subject, as in others, we do not share a common ground; since my colleagues and I have one and only one criterion: the Jewish one, I cannot argue with people who are bound by other criteria. It makes absolutely no impression upon me that somewhere, clandestinely, MK Bar-Yehudah [Mapam] objected strenuously to the fact that he was represented in Berlin, while nothing was heard publicly about his objection.

**Aaron Zisling (Mapam):** Aren't you ashamed to compare negotiations with the Nazis to participation in the Internationale?

**Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson:** I had the honor of heading a delegation to the Conference of the Socialist Internationale held in Zurich in 1947, and it was only because the Israeli delegation would not agree to abstain but voted against, that the German Socialist Democratic party was prevented from becoming a member.

As far as I am concerned, there is one rule regarding the German people. Every German, whether in the East or the West, is guilty in my eyes. It may be that there are those exceptional ones who have not sinned, but I am not yet ready to go and look for them and I am not yet prepared to give a certificate to this effect to even one of them, be he in the Easternmost circles or in the West. I am left with only the Jewish criterion which tells me that each one of us must ask himself why we have paid such an awful price, why were we, such a small people, the recipients of so much of the awful cruelty which was visited upon the world? And there is only one answer: we were weak, we were not independent, we did not have a state of our own. We asked various nations, in the East and in the West, to protect us, but not a single nation in all the world protected us. A part of our people lived in this country but we were not an independent state as yet; nonetheless, this was the only place where Jews qua Jews were enlisted in the war against Hitler. We did as much as we could but it wasn't very much. I very much want to refrain from making too much use of the names of those who are no longer alive.

And I am forced to ask myself: what is our obligation in light of this great tragedy which has befallen us? First and foremost, it obligates us to be strong, as a basis for all the rest. We must be strong not only because in that way we will truly honor the memory of those who were murdered, but rather in order to prevent the recurrence of such a thing in the life of the Jewish people. And I believe that that was the final wish of our saintly ones. They slaughtered us and cremated us because we were weak and we can only prevent this if we are truly strong. This must be the primary imperative for every Jew who is truly devoted to the State of Israel and believes in its future, and is not simply exploiting the memory of those who are no longer with us, for the purpose of the debate.

What was the situation? Had we been an independent state at the time of the Second World War, and had our army fought against Hitler together with the many armies in the world which did so and had it entered Berlin together with the armies of the East and the West, then we would have done what all those countries did: each state took from that cursed country what rightly belonged to it. We did not do this because we were only groups of Jewish fighters within other armies. Therefore I say: this is rightly ours, not by the grace of Mr. Adenauer or anyone else. It is ours.

I know that there is no comparison between the tragedies which have befallen us throughout our tragic history and the Holocaust brought upon

us by Hitler and the Nazis. There is no comparison, and yet how is it that after one or another of those pogroms in one country or another (and there are very few countries which have not seen uprisings against the Jews), it neither occurred to us to demand, nor to anyone else to offer, the return of at least some part of the plunder? What were we? We were not an independent nation, nor a state, we were not one of the nations, and who had to pay any attention to us? The most we could do was to elicit an expression of remorse from some neutral country. And that is where we invested all our efforts and our abilities, for decades—going around the world in search of some good non-Jew who would say to us: what a shame, my heart goes out to you. This is the first time that we can address the murderer and the slaughterer as an independent nation presenting its claim.

Someone asked, how can we sit down with them? We shall sit with them as a victorious nation sits with a vanquished nation. Our primary victory is that we are alive. It was Hitler's intention that not a single Jew remain alive. He certainly did not anticipate that after all that destruction there would still be Jews in the world—not a few individuals dependent upon the good graces of the non-Jews, good and bad, but Jews as a people, as a nation with a state of its own, a nation determining its own fate and building up its strength so as to prevent similar tragedies in the future. This was most certainly not his intention and in this we were victorious.... We have in the first years of our existence managed to build up our own strength and even to save and bring masses of Jews to this country and to assure them that tragedies of this kind will not befall them again.

I want to appeal to the members of the Knesset who talk about these things honestly and out of an aching heart: consider this—Jewish children, alive but endangered, old people who are still alive and in danger—are they less holy in our eyes because they are alive? Is there anyone in this hall who can get up and say, in full certainty, that he knows of a corner of the world where Jews live, outside the State of Israel, where their lives are absolutely safe? Those Jews—children, women and men who have remained alive—don't we owe them anything? Doesn't their being alive obligate us to save them with all speed?

Those Jews have only one salvation—this country. We must strengthen ourselves in every way in order to save them quickly and to put all our means at their disposal. There is no more sacred obligation, there is no more Jewish obligation, there is no more patriotic obligation, there is no prouder obligation for a Jew than this. And we shall demand that which is rightfully ours and the people responsible for the Government of Israel, members of that government, have proven both in the past and in the present, even before we achieved our independence, that they know how to speak proudly, with Jewish pride, with the non-Jews. And I have no doubt that we shall be able to sit down with our arch-ene-

mies in a way which will add strength and honor to the people of Israel and not the opposite.

**M. Begin (Herut):** It will bring us honor to sit down with the Germans?

**Minister of Labor, Golda Meyerson:** We shall demand the Jewish property which they are holding. It is rightfully ours and we need it in order to strengthen Jewish life and save living Jews. We shall demand this forcefully and with all the pride and the honor of a Jew and an Israeli.

Obviously, it is possible to mix all sorts of things together—friendship, forgiveness—but this is pointless and without logic, it is unnecessary and it will not happen. There is no one who is in favor of making this claim who would dare even to think of such a possibility, of negotiations which would in any way obligate us to any one of these things.... We shall sit down with the representative of Germany not for peace nor for friendship, nor for forgiveness, nor for forgetfulness. The Jewish people will never forget this, there cannot be a single Jew who will forget.

...  
There are people in this hall who are in favor of reparations but not on the basis of direct negotiations. Let us ask others to do it for us, they say. But we have asked, and some of those to whom we turned have told us that they are not prepared to do so. And there is one Great Power which has not responded at all, a Power in whose capital city one sees an abundance of German merchandise offered for sale—I am not sure if it comes from East or from West Germany. I cannot imagine that Moscow considers it a slight to her honor to take any merchandise which she can from West Germany; on the contrary, and rightly so, she considers it an obligation since Hitler caused no little destruction in the Soviet Union. And I ask myself—and there are other people here who should certainly do likewise—what is going on here?

Why is it that it is the Soviet Union which didn't consider it necessary even to respond to us? Why didn't they tell us: Go to East Germany and negotiate with them, since they know that East Germany won't make a move without Soviet agreement. That particular door is closed for the present; are we going to reconcile ourselves to that? No! We shall claim what is ours from East Germany as well...exactly as we do from West Germany.

I can understand that there may be people who, out of genuine pain, cannot accept this conclusion, but that is a far cry from the weird philosophy which says that logic is invalid...that there must be a "tragic contradiction" between the heart and the mind, as we have heard from the circles of the Hashomer Hatzair. There is no such necessity; sometimes there is such a fissure and that is bad indeed, but it does not have to be so. In this instance, both the Jewish heart and simple logic dictate that we tell those who murdered and plundered that in this world in which no

one is prepared to aid in the doing of justice, that we rejoice that we are no longer dependent upon the favors of others. We are overjoyed that we need no longer run about in the corridors of other nations and in the different congresses to seek out protectors who will do something for us. As a free independent nation which took this task upon itself, it is incumbent upon us to secure the lives, the security and the honor of the people of Israel; as the representatives of a proud people we shall go honorably to claim from the murderers that which is ours! In order that we become stronger and survive.

(Session adjourned.)

9 January 1952 (11 Tevet 5712)

**The Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett:** ...In closing I wish to say that all this moralizing about non-forgiveness and non-pardon and neo-Nazism is directed to the wrong address....On its own initiative, and without any urging from the Opposition, this Government took up the standard within the United Nations of the fight against the Nazi legacy, against its very existence, both in West and East Germany. Five speeches were made on this subject by the Israeli delegates in the course of the present General Assembly convening in Paris.

**Jacob Riftin (Mapam):** The vote reflected it.

**The Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett:** Correct. The distance between us and the East, in our approach to the question, was like the distance between the East and the West, but we nonetheless voted with the East because we came to the same conclusion on this specific point. They claimed that it was an insult to the German nation to send a Commission of Inquiry to investigate whether the latter was ready for elections; that it is a culturally superior nation and this would be a mark on its honor. We asked, what is the role which the German people is to play in the future course of human history, in light of its past. We were not caught up by racism and the wholesale condemnation of an entire people. We pointed out that time and again this nation has been overwhelmed by evil forces which shook the European continent and led to bloody world war, murdered whole nations and plundered vast countries. What assurance do we have that the German government will not do so in the future as well? We presented the German problem as the problem of the future of world peace. The government of Israel has no intention of deviating from this position and any negotiations which it will conduct will be confined to the question of reparations, the return of that which was looted. There is no question here of recognition or the establishment of relations. But it does involve contact which may be

unavoidable if we are to achieve this restitution of stolen property. The State of Israel stands before the German nation, before whatever German government there is, before any representative of Germany, as a victorious witness to the historic failure of Nazism, because Nazism intended to humiliate us totally and we are now one of the family of nations, while the heirs of the Nazis are left pounding on the gates for admittance. Nazism attempted to destroy us but, as we said at the Assembly, we fought back and we are alive.

Today we are an independent state. How can it be humiliating for us if the heirs of this same Nazi regime sit down in some neutral capital to negotiate with the representatives of an independent Jewish state whose very appearance represents the absolute failure of the Nazi mission?

I wish to conclude with an announcement in the name of the Government: the Government is of the opinion that it would be for the best if the Knesset would accept its suggestion and transfer to the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee the determination of future action with regard to the claims for compensation.

**Haim Landau (Herut):** Why are you trying to avoid presenting a clearcut motion here? You have already stated in the debate what you intend to do.

**The Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion:** No one is trying to avoid anything.

**The Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett:** ...Furthermore, I hereby declare in the name of the Government: Firstly, that the Government remains firm in its determination that the responsibility for the destruction of the Jewish masses in Europe lies with the German nation in its entirety;

Secondly, that the Government does not see any convincing signs that anti-Semitism has been eradicated in Germany, either East or West, since the war;

Thirdly, that we do not consider reparations as an overall cleansing of the slate; the reparations claim is no more than a claim for the restitution of part of the property stolen from the Jews. The satisfaction of this claim cannot nullify the Nazi atrocities or the vestiges of those atrocities within the German people.

...

**Zeev Sheffer, Chairman:** The results of the voting are as follows: Out of a total of 120 Members of Knesset, 4 were not present at the time of the vote, 5 abstained, 61 voted for Motion A (to give the Foreign Affairs Committee the authority to determine the action to be taken under the given circumstances) and 50 voted for Motion B (the Knesset rejects the motion to conduct negotiations between the Government of Israel and Germany regarding reparations).

## Official Language Bill

### Introduction

Under the British Mandate there had been three official languages in Palestine—English, Arabic and Hebrew. All three languages were permitted in courts of law; laws and proclamations were published in all three, with the English text determinant in case of dispute.

That law had been abolished by the Knesset, but no new law had yet taken its place. Some of the problems involved were aired in the course of a preliminary debate on a private member's bill of a member of Herut.

### Sitting 102 of the Second Knesset

2 July 1952 (9 Tammuz 5712)

**Esther Raziel-Naor (Herut):** Mr. Chairman, Honorable Knesset, the motion which I have the honor to present to the House in the name of my faction...was first tabled on the 11th of Kislev (10 December 1951), just short of seven months ago. This proposal has been on the table for such a long time simply out of bad luck and as I had no intention of withdrawing it, I could do no more than wait patiently until it came up for debate.

This proposal—the Official Language Bill—is intended to legally establish Hebrew as the state language, and to determine that MKs shall not use any other language in carrying out their duties in the Knesset and its committees. In the working of the rest of the official institutions of the state, in the ministries, the law courts, the local councils and for didactic purposes in the schools, the use of foreign languages will be permitted according to specific need. As the highest authority, the Government shall be authorized to issue regulations from time to time determining the use of foreign languages, in accordance with this paragraph.

This law is intended to repair a serious breach in our public life by administrative regulation. Every country diligently protects its language and is concerned that the people speak in their own tongue. For language is symbolic of the uniqueness and independence of a nation. The special situation of the Jewish people—dispersed, stateless and lacking in any sovereign framework throughout a very long period in the course of its history, calls for the energetic and forceful preservation of this principle. If we scrutinize the position of foreign languages in our literature and in the so-called “arts,” and if we see the large number of foreign-language newspapers whose presence foster alienation, then