

## Chapter 8

### Negotiations with Germany: Who is in Favor? Who is Against?

The day following his historic meeting with Adenauer, Nahum Goldmann sent a telegram to Ben-Gurion (through Israel's minister to London, Elath) informing him that the conversation with the German leader had gone very well. "I am convinced," he added, "that the Chancellor seriously intends to settle the matter in a satisfactory manner."<sup>1</sup> On December 10, Ben-Gurion had the occasion to witness the written outcome of this meeting with his own eyes, when Goldmann handed him the Chancellor's letter. The Prime Minister was very pleased with its contents.<sup>2</sup> As far as he was concerned, it was now possible to turn to the government and the Knesset – and indirectly, the people – and request their support for the idea of Israeli-German negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

The first and most important stop on the campaign to mobilize the political system in favor of negotiations was Mapai. Considering the parliamentary heft of this party, its support could very well tip the balance. Forty-five out of the one hundred and twenty Knesset members belonged to Mapai, and an additional five members belonged to Arab minority parties that were linked to Mapai and voted according to its wishes. It held an absolute majority within the coalition, fifty out of sixty-five Knesset members, as well as in the cabinet – nine ministers out of thirteen. On December 13, the Mapai Central Committee convened to deliberate on the issue. Ben-Gurion opened the discussion with a brief speech. Proceeding swiftly to the point, he asked the members to embrace the idea of negotiations because, among other reasons, "according to the information currently at our disposal [. . .] the [West] German government is ready to conduct talks with [. . .] Israeli representatives based on the claim presented by the State of Israel." At the end of Ben-Gurion's remarks, a long and thorough discussion ensued. The vast majority of those present sided with the Prime Minister's position and accordingly voted for "entering direct negotiations over reparations with Germany."<sup>4</sup>

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1 DEPI, Vol. 6, Document 518, E. Elath to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 7, 1951.

2 The IMFA too was pleased with the content of the letter. ISA, MFA 2417/3, E. Herlitz to F. Shinnar, December 19, 1951.

3 BGA, BGD, December 10, 1951.

4 ILPA, 2–23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951. For more about this meeting, see: Cohen, "Holocaust Survivors' Activism," 130–133.

With the backing of his party, on December 16 Ben-Gurion arrived at the second stop of the campaign – the government. He told the cabinet ministers about Goldmann's meeting with Adenauer and the clarification letter. The Chancellor, Ben-Gurion continued, was scheduled to inform his ministers of this dramatic turn of events sometime in the coming week. Once this was done, the Israeli government would approach the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and notify it of the intention to open negotiations with the Germans. Due to the pressure applied by one of the religious ministers, it was decided to discuss this question at a special caucus of the coalition parties.<sup>5</sup> Two weeks later, on December 30, the government held a second meeting dedicated to the subject of negotiations. Foreign Minister Sharett announced that Adenauer had indeed apprised his government with regard to the clarification letter, and thus it was fitting to inform the Knesset that "the [Israeli] government has decided to enter into negotiations" with West Germany. Minister Yitzhak Meir Levin, a member of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel party and the only survivor of Nazi persecution within the government, demanded that the cabinet hold an official vote on the matter and his request was approved.<sup>6</sup> With an absolute majority of eleven ministers for and one (Minister Levin) against,<sup>7</sup> it was decided that "the government of Israel would enter into negotiations with the government of [west] Germany on the subject of reparations based on the claim presented to the occupying powers."<sup>8</sup>

On January 1, 1952, the campaign arrived at its third stop – the meeting of the coalition parties. Besides Mapai and the Arab minority parties, the coalition included four other factions: Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi (eight Knesset members) and Ha-Mizrachi (two Knesset members) representing Religious-Zionism, and Agudat Israel (three Knesset Members) and Poalei Agudat Israel (two Knesset members) representing the ultra-Orthodox segment of Israeli society. In the course of the meeting, it became clear that a good portion of the religious and ultra-Orthodox Knesset members (the latter especially) shared Minister Levin's negative view toward the idea of negotiations. These members demanded to have the freedom to vote their conscience when it came time to decide on the subject in the Knesset. Mapai was in no position to refuse since it was the religious/Orthodox parties that secured its coalition majority. Their demand was thus approved, given that there was no risk of losing the coalition majority during the Knesset vote. The discussion also addressed the question of the wording of the resolution the government would submit to the

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5 ISA, Meeting of the Cabinet, December 16, 1951, 8–11.

6 ISA, Meeting of the Cabinet, December 30, 1951, 33–43.

7 There were other members of the Knesset who were Holocaust survivors, and they tended to oppose the idea of negotiations. Wreschner, "Parliamentary Survivors."

8 ISA, 7484/11 A, Government's Resolution from December 30, 1951.

Knesset. In another attempt to appease the religious-Orthodox side of the coalition, Mapai suggested that the phrasing of the resolution be vague so as not to constitute an explicit and direct authorization on behalf of the parliament for the government to commence talks with West Germany. From Mapai's perspective, this would allow their pious peers to vote "yea" on the resolution in the Knesset. The vague wording was presented to those present and was approved by a majority of votes.<sup>9</sup>

In the early afternoon hours of December 30, at the close of its meeting, the government notified the Knesset's House Committee (and simultaneously, the press) of its intention to put the question of Israeli-German negotiations up for deliberation and a vote in the plenum. They requested that the parliamentary discussion be held as early as January 2, 1952.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, at the House Committee meeting held the next morning, on December 31, representatives of the opposition parties vehemently protested the government's intention to hold the deliberation on such short notice and insisted that it be postponed. The government's aim, proclaimed *Herut*, was "transparent": it aimed to "disallow coalition party members the time to make up their minds."<sup>11</sup> Following a lively debate, the committee decided to postpone the discussion to Monday, January 7.<sup>12</sup>

The vote on the issue of negotiations was fast-approaching, and the various parties had to determine the manner in which their representatives would vote.

The Executive Committee of the second-largest faction in the parliament, the General Zionists, convened in the afternoon of January 2 and held a "poignant" debate on the subject, which ended in the decision to reject the idea of negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

The following day, the Political Committee of the Progressive Party discussed the question and chose to allow its representatives to vote their conscience.<sup>14</sup> This decision was predictable. About two months earlier the party's executive had held an in-depth examination of the idea of negotiations with Germany. Opinions supporting both sides of the issue were heard;<sup>15</sup> however, eventually it was determined that the party's Knesset members would vote as they saw fit.<sup>16</sup> The decision was

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<sup>9</sup> Weitz, "The Road to Wassenaar," 330–332.

<sup>10</sup> *Davar*, December 31, 1951.

<sup>11</sup> *Herut*, January 4, 1952.

<sup>12</sup> KA, Meeting of the House Committee, December 31, 1951, 5–9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ha-Boker*, January 3, 1952.

<sup>14</sup> *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 4, 1952.

<sup>15</sup> MA, AR-M-030-005, Meeting of the Executive, November 1, 1951.

<sup>16</sup> MA, AR-M-00007-002, The Deliberations on Foreign Policy – Executive Meeting from November 1, 1951.

ratified by the party's Political Committee, which convened a few days later.<sup>17</sup> It was estimated in the halls of government that out of the party's four members, three would vote for negotiations, and one would vote against. Even though the Progressives were in the opposition, it was not surprising to see their party siding with the coalition on this issue. The Progressive party was the political home of many German and Austrian Jews, i.e., the segment of the population who had a vested interest in reaching a settlement regarding the various compensation claims.

On January 3, it was the turn of the two Religious-Zionist parties – Ha-Mizrachi and Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi – to assemble. The fact that some portion (albeit relatively small) of these parties' members adamantly opposed the idea of negotiations influenced to some degree the decisions made at their executives' meetings. After a long discussion, Ha-Mizrachi's executive decided that the party was in favor of negotiations with the West Germans on the matter of reparations. Nevertheless, in light of Knesset member Rabbi Mordechai Nurock's absolute refusal to fall in line with this decision, the executive decided to allow him to choose which way to vote independently.<sup>18</sup> The executive of Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi likewise expressed its support for negotiations while allowing its dissenting members to abstain during the vote, provided that the coalition managed to secure the majority it required.<sup>19</sup> All in all, it is possible to state that the Religious-Zionist camp was mostly leaning toward a moderate stance on the question of negotiations and probably on the German question as a whole.<sup>20</sup> This is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that the subject of "Germany," in all its various aspects, hardly came up on the agendas of Ha-Mizrachi and Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi during those years.<sup>21</sup>

Staunch opposition to the idea of negotiations with the Federal Republic was found among members of the ultra-Orthodox Poalei Agudat Israel party, an opposition that was prominently expressed in its organ *Shearim*, which abounded in articles criticizing the idea.<sup>22</sup> On January 6, the party's Executive Committee

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17 MA, AR-M-00013-008, Protocol from the Deliberations of the Political Committee, November 4, 1951.

18 Nurock had lost his wife and two sons in the Holocaust.

19 *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 4 and 7, 1952.

20 See in this context: Don-Yehiya, *Religious Zionism*, 215–216; Schwartz, "The Revealed and the Concealed," 139–140.

21 This, based on a thorough review of source materials in the Archive of the Institute for the Research of Religious Zionism from the years 1950–1953. Both these parties focused their attention mainly on "state and religion" matters. See also: Michlis, "The Religious Zionism's attitude to Germany," 59–60.

22 *Shearim*, October 31 and December 27, 1951 and January 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 20, 1952.



convened and unanimously decided to demand that the coalition directorate allow their parliamentary representatives to vote independently.<sup>23</sup> A more complex stance emerged from its sister ultra-Orthodox party, Agudat Israel. Although there too the general inclination was against reparations talks, more than a few elements in the party pushed for the move. The views of the latter were reflected in *Ha-Modia*, which, unlike *Shearim*, printed articles in unmitigated support of the negotiations idea. On January 6, the Central Committee of Agudat Israel gathered for deliberations. The discussants failed to reach an agreed decision and decided to reconvene on the morrow, the opening day of deliberations in the Knesset.<sup>24</sup> The final decision regarding which way to vote was made by the two ultra-Orthodox parties very close to the moment of truth: objectors were allowed to abstain, most likely with the coalition's consent.

The three parties that had been most active in the campaign against negotiations – Herut, Mapam, and Maki – had no need for exhausting discussions about the way their representatives should vote in the parliament. They were determined to say “nay” to the government's proposed resolution. Plenty of evidence indicated as much, but we shall mention two signs in particular. Shmuel Mikunis, a Knesset member on behalf of Maki who had been absent from parliamentary meetings for several weeks due to personal reasons, announced his intention to attend the momentous vote. Likewise, Herut representative Aryeh Ben-Eliezer, who was bedridden with a grave illness, asked his doctors' permission to go to the Knesset in order to cast his ballot.<sup>25</sup> After deliberating on the matter, the doctors decided to acquiesce to the request, and Ben-Eliezer became the first parliament member ever to arrive at the Knesset on a gurney.<sup>26</sup>

On January 7, the issue of negotiations over reparations reached its final stop – the Israeli parliament. The subject first landed on the desk of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, which conferred over it for close to four hours, starting at 11 am. The first to speak was Foreign Minister Sharett, who pointed out to those present Chancellor Adenauer's written agreement to accept “our claim as formulated in the missive of March 12, 1951, as the basis for negotiations.” Following his remarks, a mostly matter-of-factly discussion ensued, focusing on elucidating the economic and technical aspects of the negotiations and reparations issues.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Davar*, January 7, 1952.

<sup>24</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 7, 1952.

<sup>25</sup> *Ma'ariv*, January 4, 1952.

<sup>26</sup> Carmel, *It's all Politics*, “Ben-Eliezer (Zabrowsky), Aryeh,” 148.

<sup>27</sup> ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 7, 1952, 1–28.

A few minutes past 4 pm, the deliberation in the Knesset commenced.<sup>28</sup> It was, some claim, the most dramatic debate in the history of the Israeli parliament.<sup>29</sup> Prime Minister Ben-Gurion opened the session with a twenty-minute speech.<sup>30</sup> He described in great detail the unfolding of the reparations saga from the submission of the missive to the powers in March 1951 to the reception of the clarification letter from the Chancellor in December. With regard to the latter, he revealed to the Knesset, and to the Israeli public, that a few weeks previous the West-German Chancellor “committed [. . .] in writing [. . . on behalf of his government] to discuss with the State of Israel and with representatives of Diaspora Jewry the reparations claim” on the basis of the Israeli missive from March 1951. This was a clear attempt by Ben-Gurion to sway Jewish-Israeli public opinion toward approving of direct and official negotiations between Jerusalem and Bonn. The Prime Minister refrained, however, from divulging even the slightest hint about the intensive contact that took place behind the scenes between the West German and the Jewish-Israeli camps.

Once Ben-Gurion had finished speaking, the discussion opened, and the clock began counting down the ten hours allotted to it. Twenty-eight members from across the spectrum of represented parties, with the exception of the ultra-Orthodox and Arab parties, addressed the assembly. On the part of the ultra-Orthodox Knesset members, refusal to speak was, to their minds, the only way out of the double bind in which they found themselves. Considering the widespread opposition among them to the idea of negotiations, they certainly could not speak in favor of the move. On the other hand, as members of the government and of the coalition, they also could not come out against the government’s own initiative. It was a case of the less said, the better.

The Arab parties were facing a no less tricky predicament. Elements in the camp who opposed negotiations with Germany argued that they had no business getting involved in a purely Jewish matter that was none of their concern. The head of the Herut party, Menahem Begin, made that much clear from the Knesset podium: “You [the Arab Knesset members] have the formal right to vote on this matter, but do make the distinction between a formal right and a moral right.

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<sup>28</sup> On the deliberation and the vote in the Knesset, see: KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 895–911; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 912–932; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 933–964.

<sup>29</sup> Jelinek, *Deutschland und Israel*, 159.

<sup>30</sup> According to political science researcher Yehudit Auerbach, Ben-Gurion intended this speech to reach far beyond the walls of the Knesset in Jerusalem, to the entire Jewish nation around the globe. Auerbach, “Ben-Gurion,” 284.

This is our business.”<sup>31</sup> *Yedioth Ahronoth* phrased this argument in a more aggressive manner: “The [Israeli] Arabs must not decide whether or not we should forgive [the Germans] for Treblinka [. . .] because it was not their children and parents and brothers who burned and suffocated there.”<sup>32</sup> Even so, opponents of the negotiations had no delusions that the government would give up the votes of the minority lists.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the coalition had no intention of doing so. And yet, out of awareness of the sensitivity of the argument raised by the opposition camp,<sup>34</sup> it appears that the coalition prevented its Arab members from speaking during the deliberation. At the same time, it attacked what it saw as the hypocrisy of its opponents; that is, their eagerness to accept the votes of the two Arab representatives of Maki and the Arab representative of Mapam.<sup>35</sup>

The conspicuous absence of the ultra-Orthodox members of parliament from the oratory stage seemed to bolster the opinion among the opposition parties that the government’s majority was artificial, i.e., obtained only thanks to the coalitionary discipline imposed by Mapai on its religious/Orthodox allies.<sup>36</sup> “We repudiate, in advance,” exclaimed *Al Ha-Mishmar* on the eve of the Knesset deliberation, “the legality and morality of the meager and artificial majority,” which did not, according to the paper, constitute “a *true* majority.” And yet, the article stated, even if there were an “unforced and unpressured” majority, it too would have “no right or authority to decide on the matter.”<sup>37</sup> When it came to issues of such immense importance to the state and the nation, the Mapam mouthpiece explained (and other opposition organs repeated), the people must be given the right to decide. In a democratic country, the people communicate its decision on critical issues by way of elections. In Israel, however, during the last election held on July 30, 1951, the question of German-Israeli negotiations had not been on the public agenda and, therefore, the people had not had

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31 KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 905. In a letter to a friend, Begin wrote that it was improper for the Arab members of the Knesset to vote on the subject of reparations just as it was improper for Jewish members of parliament in Christian country to vote on issues of controversy between the Catholic and the Protestant churches. JIA, H1 – 1/2/3, M. Begin to Mr. Siara, March 31, 1952.

32 *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 4, 1952.

33 *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 4, 1952; *Ha-Boker*, January 7, 1952; *Ha-Kol*, January 3, 1952.

34 A Knesset representative of Mapai admitted to party activists that “we would not feel very comfortable getting the Arabs involved in this campaign.” Weitz, “The Road to Wassenaar,” 333. Ben-Gurion took care to emphasize in his diary, on the eve of the Knesset deliberation, that “there will be fifty-four Jews for the reparations. Fifty Jews against.” BGA, BGD, January 6, 1952.

35 ISA, Meeting of the Cabinet, January 6, 1952, 16; *Ha-Modia*, January 7, 1952.

36 In the opinion of one analyst, “were the Knesset to vote according to the conscience of its members [. . .] the majority of delegates would have rejected the agreement [resolution], and even with a resounding majority.” Witzthum, *The Beginning*, 81.

37 *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 6, 1952 (emphasis in the original).

the opportunity to have their say in the matter. In order to obtain the people's decision without going through another election, a referendum needed to be held in which the citizens of Israel would declare whether they were for or against negotiations between Israel and Germany.<sup>38</sup>

The call for a referendum became a prominent battle cry among the opposition parties.<sup>39</sup> The idea also caught on among the major unaffiliated press outlets. *Yedioth Ahronot*, in a special editorial article, demanded a referendum,<sup>40</sup> while *Ma'ariv* decided to make it, in some small way, a reality by holding a survey among its readers on the question of negotiations.<sup>41</sup> The objective was to amplify the pressure on the government to hold a popular referendum.<sup>42</sup> The Friday, January 4, 1952 issue of the paper contained a form where readers were asked to mark whether they were for or against negotiations with West Germany. The form was to then be cut out and sent to *Ma'ariv*'s editorial board. Before the survey closed, on the eve of the Knesset vote, *Ma'ariv*'s editorial office received approximately 12,000 forms; the word "against" was ticked on roughly eighty percent of them.<sup>43</sup>

The Knesset deliberation lasted three days and ended on January 9. Minister Sharett, the closing speaker of the session, responded at length to the arguments presented by those opposing negotiations. At the end of his remarks, Sharett asked the Knesset, in the name of the government, to entrust the final decision on the question of negotiations with West Germany to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. There were a few underlying reasons for this request. First, as already established at the coalition parties' meeting, Mapai believed that the religious and ultra-Orthodox members of the coalition would find it easier to vote in favor of a vague resolution or, at the very least, abstain. Beyond that, transferring the decision into the hands of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee would

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38 *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 3 and 6, 1952; *Kol Ha-Am*, October 26, 1951 and January 1 and 8, 1952; *Herut*, October 25 and November 11, 1951.

39 KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 905; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 925; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 938; Peleg-Uziyahu, "Menachem Begin and the Holocaust," 176. In this context, the far-right organ *Sulam* determined that no government or parliament in Israel had the right to vote on the issue of negotiations with the Germans. *Sulam*, January 13, 1952.

40 *Yedioth Ahronoth*, October 3, 1951.

41 This survey, according to David Witzthum, a notable Israeli journalist, "was an unprecedented and extraordinary initiative in the history of the Israeli press." Witzthum, *The Beginning*, 88. See in this context: Fuksman-sha'al, "This is how," 21–22.

42 Mann, *The Leader and the Media*, 120.

43 *Ma'ariv*, January 2 and 9, 1952. A delegate of the American Jewish Committee in Israel estimated at the time that most Israelis would oppose negotiations with Germany if asked about it by way of a referendum. AJCA, Online, Report from Israel: Israel and the Question of Direct Negotiations with Germany, January 31, 1952.

guarantee a favorable result since Mapai held the majority among its ranks. Another reason was supplied by Sharett during the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's meeting on January 15. In his view, had the Knesset plenum adopted an official resolution in favor of negotiations, it would have served as a kind of "ceremonial declaration" on the part of Israel that could have been interpreted in the international arena, and in Germany in particular, as "a shift in the Jewish people's (negative) stance and sentiment" toward the German nation.<sup>44</sup>

The coalition chair stated that the coalition parties and three members of the Progressive party propose the Knesset accept the government's request. Representatives of the General Zionists, the Herut party, Mapam, and Maki proposed rejecting the idea of negotiating with West Germany over reparations. The coalition's (and Progressive party's) resolution was cataloged as proposal A, the opposition's resolution – as proposal B. The vote went ahead following a roll-call procedure,<sup>45</sup> and at the end of it, the results showed that sixty-one Knesset members had raised their hands in favor of proposition A, fifty had voted for proposition B, and five abstained. Four Knesset members were absent from the session. Proposition A was supported by forty-five members of Mapai, five members of the Arab minority parties, six members of Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi, one member of Ha-Mizrachi, one member of Agudat Israel, and three members of the Progressive party. Proposition B was supported by twenty-one members of the General Zionists, fourteen members of Mapam, eight members of the Herut movement, five members of Maki, one member of Ha-Mizrachi, and one member of the Progressive party. The ultra-Orthodox members of the Knesset had chosen to "vote with their feet" – three of them had abstained, and one was absent.

The subject of negotiations was brought up for discussion at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on January 15. Foreign Minister Sharett informed the committee members that the government was asking of them to give it "full liberty to act on this matter as it sees fit," including entering into negotiations with Bonn. A final decision on the matter, were it to be made by a Knesset committee, he explained, would also be seen as a "ceremonial declaration." On the other hand, transferring the decision into the government's hands would seem like a "routine ordinary" procedure that did not point to any change in Israel's position vis-à-vis Germany. The opposition members of the committee protested that the government's request contradicted its statement in the Knesset. However, their objection was overruled and with a majority of eight to six, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee ruled to "bestow upon the government

<sup>44</sup> ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 15, 1952, 3.

<sup>45</sup> It was the first roll-call vote in the history of the Israeli parliament.

the authority to act on the question of reparations from Germany, including the possibility of direct negotiations, as dictated by time and circumstance.”<sup>46</sup> Negotiations with the Germans were given the green light. This was a major blow to the boycott policy (one that would, in time, prove fatal) for the sake of what the Israeli leadership considered an equally important good – the reparations claim.

The ten days that elapsed between December 30, 1951, the day the government announced its intention to put the question of Israeli-German negotiations up for a vote in the Knesset, and January 9, 1952, the day of the fateful vote, saw the public-political campaign launched by the anti-negotiations camp three months earlier reach its peak.

The press outlets of the opposition parties Mapam, Maki and Herut, as well as *Ha-Kol*, the organ of the extra-parliamentary ultra-Orthodox Pagi, printed more anti-negotiations articles and editorials during this brief period of time than they had over the previous three months combined. The same went for the unaffiliated newspapers *Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Letzte Nayer*. *Herut* went so far as to devote nearly the entirety of its January 7, 8, and 9 issues to the subject.<sup>47</sup> The tone of the writing in these papers during this critical period was far more belligerent, at times combative or even inciting, yet at the same time sentimental, verging on pathos.<sup>48</sup>

The parties' Central Committees published another round of manifestos; Maki on January 4<sup>49</sup> and the Herut movement on January 2<sup>50</sup> and 4.<sup>51</sup> Herut, in an attempt to put a spoke in the wheels of any future Israeli-German reparations agreement,

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46 ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 15, 1952, 1–28. The opposition members appealed to the Knesset's House Committee, questioning the legality of this decision which, according to them, contradicted the resolution adopted by the Knesset on January 9. The committee, however, rejected their appeal. KA, Meeting of the House Committee, January 22, 1952, 6–8; KA, Meeting of the House Committee, January 29, 1952, 3–6.

47 *Herut's* struggle was so relentless that “on its front page, in those days, all distinction was lost between headlines, news items, articles, and editorials, on the one hand, and party announcements and slogans [against the negotiations idea], on the other hand.” Mann, *The Leader and the Media*, 119–120; Witzthum, *The Beginning*, 82.

48 The most extreme attitude was adopted by *Kol Ha-Am* and *Herut*. Thus, for instance, their editors chose to print shock images from the Holocaust era on the front pages of their issues. *Kol Ha-Am*, December 31, 1951 and January 1 and 7, 1952; *Herut*, January 7, 1952. The Israeli jurist and researcher Leslie Sebba writes that, from an historical perspective, it is difficult to grasp the intensity of feeling that manifested itself in the public-political battle over the issue of reparations, almost as difficult as it is to grasp the Holocaust itself. Sebba, “The Reparations Agreements,” 208.

49 *Kol Ha-Am*, January 4, 1952.

50 *Herut*, January 2, 1952.

51 *Herut*, January 4, 1952.

went so far as to submit a bill on December 31 that would rule out any possibility of commerce with the Germans.<sup>52</sup> The bill was predictably rejected.

There were developments in the extra-parliamentary arena as well. The action committee of intellectuals and public figures that had organized in mid-October 1951 with the purpose of torpedoing the negotiations initiative was joined by other bodies working toward the same goal. The most important among them was the committee, which was affiliated with Mapam, that united the partisans, the fighters of the ghettos and the underground resistance, concentration camp prisoners, and Jewish brigade soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Two other meaningful entities were the Israeli Peace Committee, a public body with close ties to Maki and Mapam,<sup>54</sup> and the Student Council against the Absolution of Nazi Crimes, which was established in early January 1952 and which consisted of representatives of nearly all parties, with the exception of Mapai.<sup>55</sup> These and other organizations<sup>56</sup> were prolifically active in the campaign against negotiations. Among other initiatives, they contacted the Knesset presidium and asked to have their representatives be accorded an audience so they could expound their position on the issue. Some of the organizations received positive response.<sup>57</sup>

The struggle spilled over to the street. Party activists once again posted placards on building fronts denouncing the negotiations<sup>58</sup> and distributed propaganda literature to passers-by.<sup>59</sup> Herut associates even attempted to lay siege to Minister Sharett's house.<sup>60</sup> However, the stand-out feature of the street campaign, and in general during those tempestuous first ten days of January 1952, were the gatherings, the popular rallies, and the demonstrations, organized by extra and intra-parliamentary agents, which took place in many cities across Israel.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Herut*, December 31, 1951.

<sup>53</sup> More specifically, there were links between the committee and the Ahdut Ha-Avoda – Poalei Zion movement, one of the two divisions of Mapam. Izhar, *Between Vision and Power*, 262.

<sup>54</sup> This organization was a local branch of the World Peace Council – an international peace movement established in 1949 in protest to the development and proliferation of the nuclear weapon. In theory, this movement was neutral in the rivalry between the Eastern and Western blocs. However, in practice, it was pro-Soviet. Hermann, “The Rise.”

<sup>55</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 7, 1952.

<sup>56</sup> For example: Tandi – Movement of Democratic Women in Israel. *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 9, 1952.

<sup>57</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 7 and 9, 1952.

<sup>58</sup> Some of the placards displayed horrifying images from the Holocaust era. YTA, 10–16/1/1, The Organization of the Anti-Nazi Fighters – Posters against ties with Bonn, 1951–1965.

<sup>59</sup> Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 211.

<sup>60</sup> Yablonka, “The Commander,” 216.

<sup>61</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 6, 8 and 9, 1952; *Kol Ha-Am*, January 6 and 8, 1952; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 6, 1952.



The pinnacle of these gatherings was the mass rally organized by the Herut movement at Zion Square in Jerusalem on January 7.<sup>62</sup> The rally began at 4 pm,<sup>63</sup> the same time as the Knesset deliberation. The number of participants was estimated at 15,000 people – a sizeable crowd considering the cold and rainy weather.<sup>64</sup> Several speakers addressed the crowd and then Begin took the stage.<sup>65</sup> The speech he made was inciteful, bordering on encouraging outright rebellion. He claimed that the police were carrying German-made gas grenades – “the same gas that suffocated our fathers” – and that the government had “concentration camps” at its disposal. But, despite all this, Begin was undeterred: “There will be no negotiations with Germany,” he stated, “for this, we are all willing to lay down our lives.”<sup>66</sup>

This speech laid out the radical position held by the leader of the right-wing party toward Germany and the German people in a clear and poignant manner. His stance on the matter stemmed first and foremost from personal experience. The Begin family had resided in Poland and when the Nazis invaded the country in September 1939, the 26-year-old Menahem Begin was forced to escape to Vilnius where he was arrested by the Soviets.<sup>67</sup> A far more gruesome fate awaited his loved ones: most of his family members, including his parents, sister, and many members of his wife’s family, were slaughtered by the Nazis. In light of this tragic biography, the Holocaust was thus an integral part of Begin’s emotional and, as a result, political worldview.<sup>68</sup> It was a manifest reality that accompanied him throughout his life and was a primary driving force, not only with regard to

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62 Beyond this specific demonstration, the right-wing movement organized during those ten days rallies and demonstrations all over the country. *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 6, 1952; *Herut*, January 6, 1952.

63 The account of the events that took place at the January 7 Herut rally is based on the following sources: Ozacky-Lazar, “The Herut Movement’s Struggle,” 150–152; Weitz, *The First Step to Power*, 105–111; Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 212–219; *Herut*, January 8, 1952.

64 *Herut* urged members of the party and its sympathizers to attend the rally en masse. *Herut*, January 6 and 7, 1952.

65 A thorough analysis of this speech and all its facets can be found in: Lavi, *The Begin Code*.

66 Arye Naor, a political science researcher who dealt extensively with Menachem Begin and his party, wrote in regard to these proclamations that “all who heard these words could not help but get the impression that Begin was talking about civil war.” Naor, “Ben-Gurion and Begin,” 113. The day after the rally, *Herut* published Begin’s speech. In response, the legal advisor to the government filed a lawsuit against the paper for “publishing remarks that can be construed as a conspiring to instigate rebellion.” This lawsuit was later dropped. JIA, L14 – 5/1, A lawsuit against *Herut*, 1952.

67 He was sentenced to eight years of hard labor but released in the summer of 1941.

68 For example, in his mind’s eye, Begin viewed the reparations affair in terms of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion sitting in the company of the Nazi murderers of his family and haggling with them over money in exchange for conciliation. Grosbard, *Menachem Begin*, 123. Hanna Yablanka, an Israeli historian specializing in, among other things, the memory of the Holocaust in



Israeli-German relations but also other questions of state policy (on matters concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict, for example).<sup>69</sup>

When he had finished his speech, Begin set off to the Knesset, a few minutes' walk away from the location of the rally, to speak there. The massive, fired-up crowd he left behind sought to translate his words into actions. A short time after Begin departed, the crowd began marching toward the parliament. The police had been prepared for such an event but, as it turned out later, not prepared enough. Hundreds of policemen from across Israel came to back up the capital's law enforcement units. The Knesset building had been surrounded with blockades and barbed-wire fences. The streets were closed to traffic, and only occupants of nearby houses and shop owners were allowed to pass. All this did little to stop the crowd. The demonstrators managed to overwhelm the police barricades and, within minutes, were at the gates of the Knesset building. Shouts of insults against the government and especially the Prime Minister were heard from all sides, and soon stones were hurled in the direction of the Israeli House of Representatives.<sup>70</sup> The police did not hesitate to use force: clubs were used to repel the rioters, tear-gas and smoke grenades were thrown into their midst. The place had become a battlefield. Soon, the turmoil penetrated the Knesset building. The windows of the plenum hall, situated on the ground floor, were shattered. Shards of glass began to litter the floor and the Knesset members' desks. Stones were now flying in, one of them hitting a Knesset member on the head, forcing him to leave the building covered in blood. The tear-gas the police had used on the protesters was also now seeping in through the shattered windows. The Knesset members found themselves continuing their discussion with watering eyes.<sup>71</sup> Begin, the leader of the Herut demonstrators outside, was speaking at the plenum lectern just as the disturbances were taking place. The atmosphere inside was tense and hostile, and soon verbal altercations broke out among those in attendance. A female member of Mapai hurled insults at a Herut representative and even grabbed her by the throat.<sup>72</sup> The Prime Minister shouted out something

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Israel, maintains in this context that Begin "developed his own image as part of the Holocaust survivors' community and as their principal spokesman." Yablonska, "The Commander," 215.

69 Shilon, *Begin*, 171–172; Gordis, *Menachem Begin*, 50; Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin*, 11–12, 99.

70 A certain number of protesters from a Maki rally held at the same time at a nearby location joined the Herut demonstrators storming the Knesset. *Ha'aretz*, January 8, 1952; *Shearim*, January 8, 1952.

71 Later, Ben-Gurion would write: "If I hadn't stopped the rabble from bursting into the Knesset, through the timely use of army force, parliament members would have been slaughtered." Naor, "Ben-Gurion and Begin," 115.

72 KA, Meeting of the House Committee, January 8, 1952, 2.

about the “hooligans” outside, to which Begin retorted: “You are the hooligan.” The chairman of the session demanded that Begin retract his offensive remark. The latter refused, and the chairman stopped the session. It recommenced three hours later. In the meantime the violent protest outside died down.<sup>73</sup> Roughly 350 people, approximately 150 policeman and 200 demonstrators, were injured during the events, most of the injuries minor. Close to 400 protesters, among them leading figures in the Herut movement, were arrested.<sup>74</sup> There were enormous property damages, including to Knesset members’ personal vehicles.<sup>75</sup>

The day after the attack on the Knesset, Ben-Gurion delivered a special address to the nation, broadcast over Kol Israel radio, and published prominently, in full, in most of the daily newspapers. “The first step toward the destruction of democracy in Israel has been taken,” he warned. “It has been declared that not the nation’s elected representatives will decide Israel’s policy, but rather the people of the fist and of the political assassination.”<sup>76</sup> Ben-Gurion, as it appears, had no intention of biting his tongue in response to the hateful remarks Begin had directed at him and his government. According to political science researcher Arye Naor, this was the climax of the twin delegitimization campaigns these two movement leaders had waged against each other since their political conflict began in the mid-1940s.<sup>77</sup>

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73 Various Herut personalities tried to underplay the scope of the party’s responsibility for the violent incident. Thus, according to one of Herut’s founders, “a small group among the protesters, acting independently [. . .] hurled stones at the Knesset.” Tamir, *Son of this Land*, 216. A Herut Knesset Member claimed that “the shattering of [the Knesset] windows was a provocation and was not the doing of the Herut people.” Lavi, *The Begin Code*, 27.

74 However, none of them were prosecuted. Yochanan Bader, one of the movement’s higher-ups, hinted that this was the result of threatening the legal advisor to the government that Herut would turn the trials into local and international media events. Bader, *The Knesset and I*, 63–64.

75 These members appealed to the Knesset’s presidium and demanded compensation for the damages done to their cars. The presidium acquiesced to their demands. KA, Meeting of the House Committee, February 26, 1952, 4–5; KA, Meeting of the House Committee, March 4, 1952, 2.

76 Ben-Gurion, *Vision and Road*, 278–280. In this context, Tamar Brosh, an Israeli historian, argues that the disturbances around the parliament had been “the most serious attempt ever made to prevent the Knesset from making a decision in a free, sovereign, and democratic manner.” Brosh, *A Speech*, 227.

77 Naor, “Ben-Gurion and Begin,” 113. Other researchers have claimed that before the turmoil caused by the reparations saga, Mapai had not viewed Herut as a real threat to its rule and therefore tended to ignore its various challenges and provocations. However, the fierce offensive launched by Herut vis-à-vis the reparations issue managed to crack Mapai’s confidence and forced it to respond sharply to Herut in general and Begin in particular. Ben-Aharon, “An Analysis,” 72.

The political system in Israel, as well as the unaffiliated newspapers, experienced a rare moment of almost sweeping consensus in terms of their agreement with the harsh, unprecedented accusations made by Ben-Gurion toward Begin and his movement. Thus, for example, *Ha-Tzofeh* warned that the riot in front of the Knesset building could be the first step on the way to an all-out rebellion against the laws of the state,<sup>78</sup> and *Ma'ariv* stated that Begin had “lost his political mind.”<sup>79</sup> A similar attitude toward Begin and his movement was expressed by other newspapers.<sup>80</sup> International elements too supported this opinion. In the aftermath of the riot, *Der Spiegel*, West Germany’s popular newsweekly, described Begin as chairman of the “fascist” Herut movement.<sup>81</sup> The British legation in Tel Aviv concluded that the Herut protesters “achieved nothing but giving their movement a bad name.”<sup>82</sup>

On January 13, the cabinet held a lengthy discussion of the violent events that had occurred around the Knesset building the previous week. Most ministers thought it a bad idea to strip Begin of his immunity and take him to court for fear that the trial would be used to convert people to his side. It was agreed, therefore, that he must be removed from Knesset sessions for a relatively lengthy period of time.<sup>83</sup> The matter was passed on to the Knesset’s House Committee and it in turn accepted Mapai’s suggestion to recommend that Begin be removed from parliamentary sessions for three months as punishment for “threatening the Knesset with acts of violence.”<sup>84</sup> The resolution suggestion was submitted to a vote in the plenum and was accepted by a majority.<sup>85</sup> Thus, Begin had made history – he became the first Knesset member to be suspended from attending the meetings of the Israel parliament.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 8, 1952.

<sup>79</sup> *Ma'ariv*, January 9, 1952.

<sup>80</sup> *Ha-Dor*, January 8, 1952; *Davar*, January 8, 1952; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, January 15, 1952; *Shearim*, January 9 and 11, 1952; *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 9, 1952; *Ha-Boker*, January 8, 1952; *Ha'aretz*, January 8, 1952; *The Jerusalem Post*, January 8, 1952; *Neueste Nachrichten*, January 11, 1952; *Mitteilungsblatt*, January 11, 1952; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 8, 1952; *Ha-Kol*, January 8, 1952.

<sup>81</sup> Margalit, “Israel,” 246.

<sup>82</sup> UKNA, FO 371/98786, British Legation in Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, February 4, 1952.

<sup>83</sup> ISA, Meeting of the Cabinet, January 13, 1952, 5–39.

<sup>84</sup> KA, Meeting of the House Committee (first session), January 14, 1952, 1–12; KA, Meeting of the House Committee (second session), January 14, 1952, 1–9; KA, Meeting of the House Committee, January 15, 1952, 2–8.

<sup>85</sup> KM, Vol. 10, January 21, 1952, 1030–1055.

<sup>86</sup> The right-wing party refused to be shaken by the Knesset’s decision. One of its members wrote to his colleague that the eagerness of Herut supporters to act for the sake of preventing the negotiations with Germany from taking place was now “much greater.” JIA, H1 – 1/2/3, Yaakov Rubin to David Bukszpan, January 18, 1952. Colin Shindler, a prominent scholar of the Israeli

The violent protest outside the Knesset had undoubtedly put a stain on the campaign waged by the anti-negotiations camp.<sup>87</sup> Even so, their public-political battle thus far deserves our esteem. After all, they had put up a long, comprehensive, and mainly dogged fight for their cause.

The same could not be said of the pro-negotiations camp, which consisted of the coalition parties, first and foremost the ruling party, Mapai, and a few non-affiliated newspapers: *Ha'aretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Neueste Nachrichten*, and *MitteilungsBlatt*.<sup>88</sup> Their campaign in support of the negotiations idea during those first fateful ten days of January 1952 was rather limp and limited in scope, not to mention the fact that their voices were barely heard at all in the three months preceding this period. It unfolded almost exclusively on the pages of newspapers. Compared to the organs of the anti-negotiations camp, the pro-negotiations press devoted little space to the subject and maintained a reserved tone for the most part.<sup>89</sup> Outside of the print media, the cause of the supporters of negotiations was championed mainly by IMFA officials Felix Shinnar and Chaim Yahil. In mid-October 1951, they had been appointed, in accordance with the Prime Minister's instruction, to handle "internal public relations regarding the

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right, argues that Begin's removal from the Knesset only bolstered his status within the movement. Shindler, *The Rise of the Israeli Right*, 254.

87 The violent rally in Jerusalem became a tool in the hands of the Israeli left that would serve them for many years to come in their political battle against the right in general and the Herut movement in particular. Medad, "A Re-Examination," 108.

88 There were few other elements who tended to favor the negotiations initiative but were not in any way active in the conflict that had swept the nation. One of the most prominent of them was the Hungarian-language newspaper *Új Kelet*. The paper's editorial board decided to disregard the "contentious" issue and, accordingly, refused to publish articles supporting or rejecting the government's move in its "Readers Write" section. *Új Kelet*, January 2, 1952. Indeed, a thorough review of *Új Kelet* issues from September 1951 to September 1952 reveals that the paper actively pushed this issue to the margins and refrained almost entirely from publishing opinion pieces on the subject. Nevertheless, one could read between the lines that the paper had an overall positive view of the idea of Israeli-German negotiations. It had expressed (reserved) support toward Adenauer's September 1951 declaration, as well as the Reparations Agreement when it was signed. *Új Kelet*, September 10, 1952. This positive position was reflected in the Hungarian Immigrants' Association's decision to support Israeli-German negotiations on the matter of reparations. *Új Kelet*, January 18, 1952.

89 Here are two enlightening examples of the scant reference in these newspapers to the question of negotiations: In its issue of January 7, 1952, *Davar* devoted one small news item at the bottom of its front page to the debate on the issue of reparations, which was about to begin that day in the Knesset. The title of the page dealt with the wage policy of the Histadrut (the General Federation of labour in Israel). *Ha-Modia*, on its part, devoted the front-page headline of January 6 to the crisis on the Korean peninsula. The expected discussion in the Knesset was reported in a tiny news item in the middle of the page.

reparations issue with the aim of immunizing the Israeli public against the [negative] propaganda on this subject currently being spread around the country.”<sup>90</sup> Over the following months, the pair held a series of small gatherings with various circles in the Israeli public and tried to convince them to get on board with the idea of the negotiations.<sup>91</sup> They were aided in their mission by Minister Sharett<sup>92</sup> and Ambassador Eban,<sup>93</sup> who came to speak in favor of the idea on a number of occasions.

This was, in fact, the sum total of the efforts made by the pro-negotiations camp. They did not hold gatherings or rallies, and certainly not full-blown unruly protests. No manifesto was published in support of their cause and no political activists pasted placards on building façades or distributed information leaflets to passers-by. Two central reasons accounted for the cautious nature of their campaign. First of all, it was emotionally difficult to publicly promote a move that stood in such stark contradiction to the sacred principle of boycotting Germany and its people. Sometimes it seemed as if advocates of the negotiations idea were being forced to do so against their will, even though they certainly recognized its importance. Secondly, the power balance in the Knesset indicated that the coalition was likely to carry the majority, albeit a relatively small one. That fact appears to have rendered the pro-negotiations campaigners somewhat complacent, or at least less raring to charge into battle.<sup>94</sup> It is also possible, in the context of the emerging power dynamic, that they chose the strategy of a quiet campaign that refrained from stoking the fire between the two sides based on the assessment that a public-political conflagration would play into the hands of the anti-negotiations camp.

In the great debate over the issue of Israeli-German negotiations, both camps raised arguments to support their respective positions. We will first present the points raised by the anti-negotiations camp, since they were the ones to fire the opening shots and since some of their claims would elicit a response from the pro-negotiations side. The anti-negotiations camp’s contentions were as follows:

1) *Revoking of the boycott policy.* Direct and official negotiations between Jerusalem and Bonn would constitute a severe breach of the sanctified boycott the Jewish people had decreed against the Germans. The damage from such a breach

<sup>90</sup> ISA, MFA 2417/3, C. Yahil to M. Sharett, November 30, 1951.

<sup>91</sup> ISA, MFA 43/10, Information Division to Israel’s Minister to London, January 7, 1952.

<sup>92</sup> Sharett, *The Reparations Controversy*, 140–141.

<sup>93</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, December 24, 1951.

<sup>94</sup> Confidence in the coalition’s impending win was reflected in statements made by Foreign Minister Sharett to an American diplomat. USNA, DoS, RG 59, CDF (1950–1954), 262.84A41/12-3051, The Embassy in Tel Aviv to the Secretary of State, December 31, 1951.

could be irreparable if a reparations agreement should be reached as a result, since a large part if not all of the compensation sum would be transferred in the form of goods. This mode of payment would establish *de facto* close economic ties between the two countries: German and Israeli officials would have to be in constant contact to coordinate the implementation of the agreement; ships bearing German flags would transport goods into Israeli ports, and vice versa, Israeli vessels would have to dock in German ports to pick up shipments; German experts would have to be flown in to Israel in order to install the delivered machinery. Moreover, this economic relationship would have to be maintained in the foreseeable future since Israel would definitely require replacement parts for the purchased machinery, as well as technicians to repair inevitable wear and tear.<sup>95</sup> Economic ties would eventually grow into diplomatic ties, which would lead to contacts with West Germany in all areas of life, and, by this point, the complete dismantling of the boycott would be a *fait accompli*. Logically this would mean Jewish-German reconciliation and forgiveness for the horrors of the Holocaust, which would be a grave betrayal of the “never forget, never forgive” edict. The memory of millions of Holocaust victims would thus be disgraced, and hundreds of thousands of survivors would be mortally offended. And that was not all. This reconciliation meant the trampling of Israel’s honor, as the nations of the world would conclude that it was possible to buy the Jewish people’s forgiveness for such a heinous crime, which had been inflicted upon them not so long ago. As a result, nations would feel repulsion and contempt, perhaps even hatred, toward the Jews.<sup>96</sup>

2) *Negotiations with a pro-Nazi government.* There were two aspects of Chancellor Adenauer’s government – its composition and its conduct in the intra-German arena – that could have merited its definition as pro-Nazi. With regard to the first, many persons in the Federal administration were indeed former Nazis.<sup>97</sup> This was an especially prominent phenomenon in the Foreign Ministry, the same office that would serve as the main interlocutor in future talks with Israel. About a third of its

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95 According to one estimate, Israel would have to purchase approximately thirty million USD worth of goods not included in the reparations agreement annually, including spare parts, equipment and raw materials for the factories it planned to build with the reparation funds. Rubinstein, “German Reparations,” 37.

96 *Kol Ha-Am*, December 31, 1951 and January 1, 1952; *Al Ha-Mishmar*, October 26, 1951 and January 6, 1952; *Herut*, October 4, 26 and 31 and November 2 and December 15, 1951 and January 2, 7 and 8, 1952; *Ha-Boker*, January 6, 1952; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 7, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 901; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 917–918, 930.

97 According to several researchers, “in Adenauer’s Germany, an astounding number of officials formerly involved in the Hitler regime were reinstated in positions of powers across all sectors of the West German state and society.” De Vita, *Israelpolitik*, 33–34.

personnel had been members of the Nazi movement, and some had even held appointed positions within the Third Reich regime. Among them, the name Hans Globke, director-general of the governmental apparatus and one of Adenauer's confidants, stood out in particular.<sup>98</sup> A jurist by training, Globke had served as a senior official in the Reich's Ministry of the Interior (even though he had not joined the Nazi party), and as such was listed among the authors of the formal interpretation of the infamous Nuremberg Laws.<sup>99</sup> In terms of the second aspect, Adenauer's government was, directly and indirectly, contributing to the revival of Nazi ideology in West Germany. It was doing so by staunchly resisting the Denazification program,<sup>100</sup> turning a blind eye to the continued existence of neo-Nazi organizations within the FRG, allowing the publications of journals and books glorifying the Third Reich era, and consenting to the appointment of former Nazi movement members to city councils and Länder governments.<sup>101</sup>

3) *The rehabilitation of West Germany.* The FRG needed to negotiate with Israel in order to complete the rehabilitation process.<sup>102</sup>

4) *Second Holocaust.* The US, with the support of Britain, was investing great effort into the foundation of a strong Western-European military force with the intention of initiating a third world war against the USSR and its communist allies. The FRG was designated to play a key role in this military array due to its strategic geographic position, its sizeable population, and its proven combat skills. However, the establishment of a large and heavily armed German force and its integration into a pan-European army was likely to provoke opposition from the Western-European nations, who feared that the Germans might go back to their old ways and use their mighty army to embark on more bloody and destructive campaigns. It was to overcome this obstacle that Washington was pressuring Jerusalem and Bonn to commence talks on the issue of reparations. Direct negotiations with the Jews, the

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98 Bark and Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 247.

99 Globke's activity was not limited to the Nuremberg Laws. Among other things, he had contributed to the consolidation of the Nazi regime by assisting in the formulation of the emergency laws that gave Hitler unrestricted dictatorial authority. Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, "Globke, Hans," 589.

100 Denazification, as it was formulated by the Americans at the end of World War II, was intended to root out Nazi ideology in Germany by removing former members of the Nazi movement from public service and trying some of them in court. Bark and Gress, *A History of West Germany*, 74–81.

101 *Al Ha-Mishmar*, November 4, 1951; *Kol Ha-Am*, October 19, 1951 and January 7 and 9, 1952; *Herut*, January 7 and 8, 1952; *Ma'ariv*, December 19, 1951; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, December 11, 1951; *KM*, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 904; *KM*, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 935.

102 *Herut*, November 2, 1951 and January 4, 1952; *Letzte Naves*, November 2, 1951 and January 4, 1952; *Ma'ariv*, November 2, 1951.



main victims of the Nazi beast, let alone an agreement with them, would prove that Germany had changed and become a remorseful and peace-seeking nation. The Western nations would thus be persuaded to rehabilitate the FRG, i.e., withdraw their opposition to the establishment of a West German army. Such a turn of events could cause a second Holocaust. The new German army would be ideologically similar to its predecessor – the Nazi Wehrmacht – just as the Adenauer government was markedly pro-Nazi. When the new world war broke out, the German army would assign part of its forces to the completion of the “final solution” to the “Jewish problem.” This would include the annihilation of the young Jewish state.<sup>103</sup>

5) *Detriment to the Israeli economy.* In order for the Reparations Agreement to benefit the Israeli economy, the goods provided to Israel under this agreement had to be mainly high-quality input factors (raw materials and machinery) necessary for the country’s industry and agriculture sectors. However, the Germans would provide input factors needed for the country’s economy sparingly, and even these could be assumed to be of low-quality. A significant portion of the reparations was expected to be paid in consumer goods. Local consumer goods producers would be devastated as a result of the market being flooded with German imported goods, and the outcome would be catastrophic: industrial production would shrink while unemployment would rise. If Israel wished to avoid the expected economic damage, it would have to get rid of some of the German goods; i.e. sell them in foreign markets. The Jewish state would thus become the principal peddler of German products around the world. Not only that, the reparations agreement would lead to a significant reduction in the amount of financial assistance Israel received from Western Jewry and the United States government. Both of these respective parties would feel that the reparations money obviated the need for significant assistance on their part.<sup>104</sup>

6) *The Germans would pay very little.* Adenauer’s government would refuse to give any significant amount in reparations with the excuse that the West German economy was still shaky and having to deal with a stack of other debts. Even if Israel were to accept this argument and sign an agreement with West Germany that only partially settled the original reparations claim, one could expect that the

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<sup>103</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, November 4 and December 30, 1951 and January 4 and 8, 1952; *Kol Ha-Am*, October 19 and 26 and December 10, 1951 and January 1, 4, 7 and 8, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 901; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 916, 925; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 935, 947; ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 7, 1952, 18; HHA, (9)120.90, Meeting of Mapam’s Political Committee, October 18, 1951.

<sup>104</sup> *Al Ha-Mishmar*, December 30, 1951 and January 8, 1952; *Herut*, November 11, 1951 and January 4, 1952; *Ha-Boker*, January 6, 1952; *Ma’ariv*, January 4 and 6, 1952; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 1, 1952; *Letzte Naves*, November 2, 1951; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 899, 904; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 930.



Germans would stop honoring this agreement sooner rather than later. After all, this was precisely what they had done in the aftermath of World War I: Germany had managed, with great cunning, to get out of paying the vast majority of the compensation with which it had been saddled. There was no reason why they should act any differently on this occasion.<sup>105</sup>

On the other side of the barricade, in the pro-negotiations camp, the following arguments were put forth:

1) *Consolidation of the Jewish state.* The reparations funds would shore up the State of Israel:<sup>106</sup> the country's shaky economy would improve, the great wave of Jewish immigrants would be properly absorbed and integrated, and the state's security, with all its various aspects, would be fortified. A robust Jewish state would be the greatest victory the Jewish people could claim over Nazi ideology, the same ideology that wished to wipe out all signs of Jewish existence. At the same time, such a state would be the best guarantee that the Holocaust could never repeat itself.<sup>107</sup>

2) *Historical precedent.* This was to be the first time in the history of the Jewish people that those who had wronged them were willing to negotiate monetary compensation for these wrongs. Such an historical precedent would make it manifest to all, especially those still plotting to harm the Jews, that spilled Jewish blood would not go unpunished.<sup>108</sup>

3) *"Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?"*<sup>109</sup> The Germans could not be allowed, from moral and practical perspectives, to inherit and reap the benefits from the property of the Jews they themselves had slaughtered.<sup>110</sup>

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**105** *Al Ha-Mishmar*, November 4 and December 9, 1951; *Herut*, November 2, 1951 and January 1 and 7, 1952; *Ha-Boker*, January 6, 1952; *Ma'ariv*, December 31, 1951 and January 4, 1952; *Ha-Kol*, December 11 and 20, 1951 and January 3 and 7, 1952; *Letzte Naves*, November 9, 1951; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 901; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 918, 924, 931.

**106** Just as the Haavara monies had strengthened the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930s, according to the pro-negotiations camp.

**107** *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, January 6 and 9, 1952; *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 4, 1952; *Ha'arets*, December 28, 1951 and January 6, 1952; *Mitteilungsblatt*, January 4, 1952; ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 7, 1952, 23; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 909, 911; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 921, 931–932; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 936–937, 945, 949, 959–961; ILPA, 2-23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion emphasized this claim. Neuberger, "Moral," 284.

**108** *Ha-Dor*, January 9, 1952; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, January 8, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 911; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 914, 932; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 945; ILPA, 2-23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951.

**109** For more on this expression, see Chapter 3.

**110** *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, January 6, 1952; ILPA, 2-23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951; ISA, Meeting of the Cabinet, December 30, 1951, 37–38; KM, Vol. 10, January 7, 1952, 897.

The rest of this camp's arguments were direct or indirect responses to claims put forth by the anti-negotiations camp. These were as follows:

4) *Israelis were already talking to Germany.* For a number of years now, there had been direct, official, and public negotiations with Germany, in the context of which tens of thousands of Israeli Holocaust survivors and Jewish successor organizations (the JRSO and the JTC) had been in contact with West German institutions (the central administration in Bonn, the Länder governments, and the courts) with the aim of restituting Jewish property and/or receiving indemnification. Some of the claims submitted by the Jewish organizations and the survivors had been accepted and the compensation amounts paid in DM. Some of the funds had made their way into Israel in the form of German goods. These Israeli/Jewish-West German contacts had provoked no protest among the opposition parties in the Knesset. On the contrary, they wholeheartedly embraced this reality.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, Israel had contact with nations who, during the Holocaust, had aided the Nazis in their enterprise of destroying and looting the Jewish people – for instance, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. None of the opposition elements in Israel had ever expressed any objection to this state of affairs.<sup>112</sup>

5) *West Germany had already achieved rehabilitation.* Anyone familiar with the latest diplomatic developments in the international arena could see that West Germany had been almost fully integrated into the political-economic-military complex of the Western Bloc. Negotiations with Jerusalem would neither add to nor detract from Bonn's success in this respect.<sup>113</sup>

6) *The boycott would remain in place.* The negotiations between Israel and Germany would be strictly limited to the matter of reparations and were not to be viewed as a prelude to the creation of economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries. The principle of boycotting the German nation would hold, and there would be no conciliation or forgiveness for the horrific events of the Holocaust.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, January 6 and 9, 1952; *Ha-Modia*, November 12, 1951; *Ha'aretz*, December 28, 1951; *The Jerusalem Post*, January 7, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 922; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 945, 955–956; ILPA, 2-23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951.

<sup>112</sup> *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, December 18, 1951; ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 7, 1952, 23; ILPA, 2-23-1951-58, Meeting of the Central Committee of Mapai, December 13, 1951.

<sup>113</sup> *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha'aretz*, December 28, 1951; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 943.

<sup>114</sup> *Davar*, October 26, 1951 and January 1 and 7, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, November 2, 1951 and January 4, 1952; *Ha-Tzofeh*, October 29 and December 10, 1951; *MitteilungsBlatt*, January 4, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 921.

As an aside, we should note that this last argument would quickly prove hollow. It did not take long after the Reparations Agreement had been ratified in March of 1953 for a slow, hesitant, but also steady process of the normalization of relations between the two countries to emerge. Looking back through history, we can conclude that the Reparations Agreement was the main catalyst of this process.<sup>115</sup>

All in all, the dispute between the two sides on the issue of Israeli-German negotiations was multi-layered and thoroughly argued, revealing a deep rift in terms of fundamental perceptions. Nevertheless, this did not mean that they were also split over the very idea of reparations. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of the anti-negotiations entities demanded that the collective reparations claim be pursued, albeit through the mediation of a third party: the great powers or a UN body. For the most part, this camp suggested the International Court of Justice in The Hague for the job.<sup>116</sup> This proposed course of action would bypass all the ills of direct negotiations: Israel would not have to be in contact with the “Nazis’ successors,” a move that would otherwise have spelled forgiveness and rehabilitation for Germany, and it could rest assured that the demanded sum would be paid in full since the third party would have the required clout to make Bonn comply with the terms of the claim. This call for the pursuit of the reparations claim by means of a third party was voiced loudly and insistently during the first weeks of the anti-negotiations camp’s publicity campaign, i.e. October–November 1951.<sup>117</sup> However, the more heated the debate between the two sides became, the less attention was devoted to this particular proposal.<sup>118</sup> It would seem that the anti-negotiations camp was not interested in overemphasizing the one common denominator it shared with the rival camp – the willingness to claim reparations – lest it overshadow the issue that divided them: the manner in which this claim was to be pursued. Doing otherwise may have taken some of the sting out of their offensive.

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115 Stauber, “The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs”; Stauber, “Israel’s Quest for Diplomatic Relations.”

116 This institution had been founded by the League of Nations in 1921 with the aim of settling disputes between states through peaceful means, based on the principles of international law. The Second World War effectively put an end to the court; however, in 1945 it was reestablished by the UN. Shatz and Ariel, *The Lexicon of the State of Israel*, “International Court of Justice,” 175.

117 *Al Ha-Mishmar*, October 30 and November 1, 1951; *Herut*, October 25 and 28 and November 2, 1951; *Ma’ariv*, October 5, 1951; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, October 3 and 29, 1952; HHA, (9)120.90, Meeting of Mapam’s Political Committee, October 18, 1951.

118 Pagi’s *Ha-Kol* even determined that if no third party could be found, Israel would be better off giving up on reparations. *Ha-Kol*, December 27, 1951.

The pro-negotiations camp hastened to respond to the “third party” solution championed by their opponents. Chaim Yehil stated it was important for the public to recognize that “there is no third way, there is only the decision whether to get reparations through direct contact or to give up on them.”<sup>119</sup> This camp pointed to the fact that the Western powers had already denied Israel’s requests to serve as “third parties,” while the USSR did not even bother to respond.<sup>120</sup> As for the international tribunal in The Hague, a *Davar* article made it clear that “there is yet to be an international legal institution [. . .] that has the power to force the sides to submit to its judgment, let alone carry out its sentence.”<sup>121</sup>

The anti-negotiations camp presented a variety of arguments, most of them in the moral-ethical domain, to justify their position on the question of negotiations with West Germany. The rival camp listened to their claims carefully and even responded to some; however, they suspected that the main, perhaps even the only thing driving the opposition in the Knesset to resist negotiations was a strictly political motive that had little if anything to do with the actual issue of reparations. “With regard to the opposition parties,” stated *Davar*, “it is not the reparations issue itself that determines [their actions], but rather considerations of a different kind.”<sup>122</sup> *Ha-Dor* likewise decreed that “the motives of the extreme right and the extreme left and of the bourgeois center are not motives of pure conscience, but rather ones of politics, both external and internal.”<sup>123</sup> Similar things could be read in *Ha’aretz*.<sup>124</sup> Much harsher criticism, however, was voiced by the religious organs *Ha-Modia*<sup>125</sup> and *Ha-Tzofeh*.<sup>126</sup> These papers likely sought to return fire over the ignominious accusation made by representatives of the opposition claiming that the religious and ultra-Orthodox Knesset members’ vote on the negotiations issue was a product of coalitionary discipline.

One can indeed say with some certainty that the opposition movements were motivated, to one degree or another, by narrow political interests, among others. However, these interests varied from party to party.

Mapam and Maki had similar political motives in that they shared an ideological affinity with the USSR to the extent of complete and utter allegiance in the

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119 ISA, MFA 43/10, Information Division to Israel’s Minister to London, January 7, 1952.

120 *Ha’aretz*, December 28, 1951; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, December 18, 1951 and January 8, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 943.

121 *Davar*, January 6, 1952 (emphasis in the original).

122 *Davar*, January 7, 1952.

123 *Ha-Dor*, January 6, 1952.

124 *Ha’aretz*, January 1, 1952.

125 *Ha-Modia*, January 4, 1952.

126 *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 4, 1952.

case of Maki.<sup>127</sup> In terms of foreign relations, this meant a hostile stance toward the Western block led by the US. It was therefore only natural that they should object to any contact, even if it were on the matter of reparations, between the State of Israel and the FRG, which by now was part and parcel of the Western side of the Cold War. Their pro-Soviet orientation also influenced Maki and Mapam's attitude toward the GDR. Unlike West Germany, it was perfectly allowable, in their eyes, to be in contact with this communist protectorate of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, a delegation of the Maki youth movement had been sent to an international communist youth festival held in August 1951 in Berlin, the East German capital.<sup>128</sup> Several months later, Mapam sent its representatives to the conference of the World Federation of Trade Unions, which also took place in Berlin.<sup>129</sup> The pro-negotiations camp jumped at the chance to attack Mapam and Maki's double standard when it came to their views of the two Germanies and accused their positions of being politically motivated. They were especially incensed at Mapam's lack of indignation at Moscow and Berlin's refusal to recognize the Jewish-Israeli compensation claims, which stood in stark contrast to Bonn.<sup>130</sup> The two left-wing movements stated, in response to their critics, that their willingness to establish contact with East Germany stemmed from the fact that, unlike its Western counterpart, this state was making efforts to purge all remnants of Nazi ideology from its midst via legal and educational means.<sup>131</sup> Mapam also maintained that it would "not tire of demanding" that Berlin pay its share of the compensation claimed by the Jewish people.<sup>132</sup>

The political considerations of the General Zionists had to do with the general parliamentary elections held at the end of July 1951.<sup>133</sup> The party had accomplished a massive electoral feat in tripling its representative power.<sup>134</sup> During coalition talks with Mapai, the General Zionists had presented a string of economic demands;

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127 Attitudes within Mapam toward the Soviets were not uniform, and some were wary of blind fealty to the communist superpower. Izhar, *Between Vision and Power*, 95–98.

128 *Kol Ha-Am*, August 5 and 19, 1951.

129 Barzel, "Positions in Mapam," 161–162.

130 *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, January 4, 1952; *Ha-Modia*, January 6, 1952; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, December 11 and 18, 1951 and January 8 and 15, 1952; *The Jerusalem Post*, January 7, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 922.

131 *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 6, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 924; KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 935, 938; YTA, 10–16/20/1, Why we took part in the Berlin youth festival.

132 KM, Vol. 10, January 9, 1952, 938; Barzel, "Positions in Mapam," 159.

133 Gilead, "Public Opinion," 69.

134 The party secured twenty Knesset seats and became the second largest party in the Israeli parliament.

however, Mapai had rejected most of them, and the negotiations amounted to nothing.<sup>135</sup> Fuming and frustrated at their inability to capitalize on their advantage, the General Zionists became a combative opposition to Mapai's government. The coalition claimed that the General Zionists' official stance against Israeli-German negotiations did not reflect the true attitudes of the party's members, many of whom were actually in favor of the idea.<sup>136</sup> This allegation is not unfounded in light of the modest campaign the movement ran in support of its position. There had been no General Zionist protests, no manifestos published, and the coverage of the subject in its mouthpiece, *Ha-Boker*, was "relatively restrained."<sup>137</sup> Mapam had discovered this attitude based on personal experience. In February 1952, the left-wing movement approached the General Zionists' leadership with an offer to cooperate in the campaign against negotiations, to which the General Zionists did not even bother to respond.<sup>138</sup> The pro-negotiations camp was quick to pummel the General Zionists over their "sordid" political calculations. "Were the General Zionists currently included in the government," *Ha-Tzofeh* pondered sarcastically, "what would have been their stance on the reparations issue: moral or utilitarian?"<sup>139</sup> A similar statement was made by a Mapai representative at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee dealing with the reparations issue: "I am inclined to think that if the General Zionists were in this government, at least half of their representatives would have voted for negotiations."<sup>140</sup> Chaim Yehil concluded that the General Zionists considered the vote in the Knesset on the reparations issue "a convenient opportunity to overthrow the government."<sup>141</sup>

The Herut movement had two main political considerations motivating its opposition to Israeli-German negotiations. A Mapai member had described them both rather succinctly during the Knesset discussion in January 1952: "hatred of Mapai [. . .] and the hunger for power," as well as "the desire to once again become a

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135 Shaham, *Israel – 40 Years*, 66.

136 *Davar*, January 7, 1952; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, January 8, 1952; KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 923. During a conversation with Felix Shinnar, Nahum Goldmann stated that, to his knowledge, approximately sixty percent of the General Zionists supported the negotiations idea. ISA, MFA 43/10, F. Shinnar to M. Sharett, November 28, 1951. An emissary of the American Jewish Committee in Israel confirmed as much when he reported back to the organization's executive in the US that: "In resolving to do so [voting against the government] this party [The General Zionists] acted in disregard of the interests of its members." AJCA, Online, Report From Israel: Israel and the question of direct negotiations with Germany, January 31, 1952.

137 ISA, MFA 43/10, Information Division to Israel's Minister to London, January 7, 1952.

138 HHA, (2)64.90, Meeting of Mapam's Coordination Committee, February 25, 1952.

139 *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 4, 1952.

140 ISA, 7563/1 A, Meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, January 7, 1952, 22.

141 ISA, MFA 43/10, Information Division to Israel's Minister to London, January 7, 1952.

player on the Israeli public stage.”<sup>142</sup> The first of these touched upon the fact that Herut’s struggle against negotiations was part of a general, long-standing war it had waged against Mapai rule, first in its previous incarnation as the Zionist Revisionist movement in the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine<sup>143</sup> and then as the Herut party in the State of Israel. The German-Israeli negotiations provided a new pretext for the right-wing party to renew attacks on Mapai at a time when the traditional Herut issues, the question of Israel’s borders first among them,<sup>144</sup> had weakened or disappeared altogether due to changing realities.<sup>145</sup> The second consideration referred to the dire political crisis the Herut party had found itself in the years 1950–51, following a sharp decline in its representative power in municipal<sup>146</sup> and national<sup>147</sup> elections. There were elements within the movement that blamed Begin for this failure, and some even called for his resignation. Begin, on his part, had decided to take a break from politics and, in the summer of 1951, had picked up and left the Knesset and the party headquarters.<sup>148</sup> Herut was in all actuality left without a leader, and the common opinion in political circles in Israel was that the movement’s chances of survival were slim.<sup>149</sup> But when the question of negotiations with Germany was placed on the public agenda, this was a golden opportunity for Begin to exploit a uniquely volatile issue around which to build an intense campaign that would help him out of the crisis that had befallen him and his party.<sup>150</sup> Notwithstanding, based on thorough research we can state that, in the specific case of the

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142 KM, Vol. 10, January 8, 1952, 923. The pro-negotiations camp mentioned these two motives relentlessly. *Davar*, January 1, 1952; *Ha-Dor*, November 20 and December 9, 1951 and January 4 and 7, 1952; *Ha-Poel Ha-tzair*, January 8 and 15, 1952; *Ha’aretz*, October 28, 1951; *The Jerusalem Post*, January 6, 1952.

143 On the Revisionist movement see note 82 in Chapter 7.

144 The Herut party’s platform in the political-defense realm spoke of the “integrity of the homeland” and its spokesmen made it clear that this referred to a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan river. This position was outside of the general Israeli consensus.

145 Ozacky-Lazar, “The Herut Movement’s Struggle,” 154.

146 Municipal elections took place in Israel for the first time on November 14, 1950 (two and half years after the establishment of the state). Herut made great efforts to strengthen its power in the cities and local councils, but the results actually showed a decrease in its power. Weitz, “A Rival Banner,” 440.

147 In the general parliamentary elections held in July 1951, its power had been almost halved as it went from fourteen to eight seats. Carmel, *It’s all Politics*, “Knesset 1/ Knesset 2,” 548–549.

148 Weitz, “Where’s Menachem Begin?,” 117–127.

149 Weitz, “The Herut Movement,” 107.

150 One of the placards issued by Mapai during the reparations debate depicted a gravestone bearing the engraving “Tomb of the Holocaust” and the figure of Begin climbing up on it. At the bottom of the image, a tagline read: “The only way for Begin to ‘rise up’.” MA, AR-A-00057-014-21, Personal Archive – Yehiel Sidroni: Poster, Without Date.

Herut movement, political considerations were very much secondary to their moral-principled motivations.<sup>151</sup>

Once the Knesset had given the government the green light to go ahead with negotiations over reparations, the public-political campaign in Israel died down – for the time being.<sup>152</sup> The Ben-Gurion government had emerged victorious. However, this did not mean that the road ahead would be smooth. On the contrary, it would be full of bumps and obstacles, the first of which was the “division of labor” in terms of negotiating the compensation claims between the State of Israel and the Claims Conference.

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151 Tovy, “Don’t Buy Volkswagen!,” 16.

152 It would reignite with renewed vigor toward mid-March 1952. For more, see Chapter 10.





**Figure 8.1:** “A gathering of writers and public figures protesting against negotiations with Germany.” *Kol Ha-Am*, October 16, 1951. (Courtesy of the Communist Party of Israel – Maki).



**Figure 8.2:** “A conference of disabled veterans [of World War II] declares: Negotiations with Germany must stop; there can be no reparations for our people's blood!” *Kol Ha-Am*, November 18, 1951. (Courtesy of the Communist Party of Israel – Maki).



**Figure 8.3:** “The [Jewish] people will not give its approval for conciliation with the nation of murderers.” *Herut*, December 27, 1951. (Courtesy of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel).



**Figure 8.4:** “The yellow patch – a decoration of honor; the reparations and the negotiations [with Germany] – a shame for generations.” *Herut*, December 31, 1951. (Courtesy of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel).



**Figure 8.5:** “Returning the plundered property – but not extending a hand!” In the caricature an image personifying the State of Israel is seen demanding reparations from Germany. German hands are extended towards it offering, among other things, “normal relations.” According to the caption (and as Ben Gurion’s government claimed the whole time), Israel will not agree to reconciliation. *Davar*, January 4, 1952. (Courtesy of the Pinhas Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research).

## אבן: הברירה היא – לוותר על הרכוש היהודי שנשדד או לבוא במגע עם הגרמנים

<p>על הקהל ישתנה בשלילה על השלילה מיכ.</p> <p>מר אבן הצביע על חיתום הדול כיס והתקדים בין ישראל וארצה כי תוך היתם ההיובי שקיים כאמ"ב לס'</p>	<p>טאת סופרנו בירושלים</p> <p>מר אבן אבן ציר ישראל בראשונה טון ונציג ישראל בארץ העמיד לי צאת בעוד ימיים לעצרת בפאריס ולעמוד בראש משלחת ישראל שם.</p>
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**Figure 8.6:** “Eban: The choice is – to relinquish the robbed Jewish property or to establish contacts with the Germans.” *Ha-Tzofeh*, January 6, 1952. (Courtesy of the *Makor Rishon* weekly).

## הימים הללו



— הובין עוד קצת אבנים ומיד נרד למחתרת !

**Figure 8.7:** “Order another few stones and we shall immediately go underground!” In the caricature the image of Menachem Begin, the leader of the right-wing Herut movement, appears alongside weapons and a pile of stones. This caricature signifies criticism of Begin for the violent mass rally, which his movement held opposite the Israeli parliament on January 7, 1952. *Ha’aretz*, January 11, 1952. (Courtesy of the *Ha’aretz* daily and the heirs of the caricaturist Joseph M. Bass: Yona Shpigelman, Yael Hean, and Rephael Bass).



Figure 8.8: "The crowds of people protesting against the criminal negotiations with the neo-Nazi Bonn government." *Kol Ha-Am*, January 6, 1952. (Courtesy of the Communist Party of Israel – Maki).

## פרטיזנים ולוחמי מחתרת קוראים: מו"מ עם בון - בגידה בקורבנות

Figure 8.9: Main headline: "Partisans and underground fighters are calling out: Negotiations with Bonn – betrayal of the victims." *Al Ha-Mishmar*, January 6, 1952. (Courtesy of the Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Yad Yaari).

[illegible]

**באטייליקט זיך איז פראסטעט אקציע קעגן פארהאנדלונגען מיט דייטשלאנד**

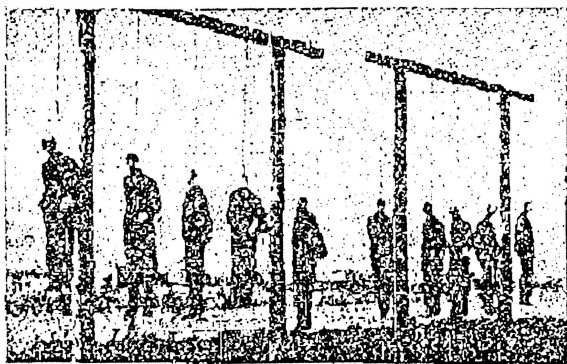
**שיקס איידע אומער שופמן און דער רעדאקציע „לעצטע נייעס“**

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# לעצטע נײַעס

**ד' מאנאט "פרייהייט"**  
**אומאויסלייף צייטונג**  
**- בערלינער פאליטיק**  
**וויכטיגסט און קולטור**  
 ווארט: 10 גרוש

<p><b>ה'תש"ח</b> <b>1948</b></p>	<p><b>רעדאקציע און אדמיניסטראציע:</b> תל־אביב, רח' ה'ק' (אין היקף)                  אדרס פאר ברייף ווערן: 1025                  London News Syndicate P.O. Box 2025</p>	<p><b>מדינת ישראל</b>                  משרד המודיעין                  תל אביב</p>
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## היש להם שלום?

**Figure 8.12:** “Are there reparations for them?” *Herut*, January 7, 1952. (Courtesy of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel).

## לא נשכח ולא ניתן להשכיחו

רק לפני שנים מספר...



על התמונה — יהודים שהוצאו להורג בבלז'צ'ק (פולין).  
 היכן בממלכת היסטר לא נשכחו אחינו? — עתה זוכמת ממשלת  
 גוריון לשאת ולתת רשמית עם ממשלת בון הניאונאצית, יורשת היסטר  
 וממשיכה מסורתה — מסורת המלחמה, מסורת שחיטות חסונות.  
 הלא נשכח חסונות?!

לעולם לא נהיה בזחנה אחד עם הנאצים!

**Figure 8.13:** Heading above the image: “We shall never forget nor allow it to be forgotten!” Caption underneath the image: “Jews executed at Wloclawek in Poland [during the Holocaust].” *Kol Ha-Am*, January 4, 1952. (Courtesy of the Communist Party of Israel – Maki).



The preparations for the Israel Police for the mass rally of the Herut movement in Jerusalem on January 7, 1952



**Figure 8.14:** (Courtesy of the Meitar Collection, Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, National Library of Israel).



**Figure 8.15:** (Courtesy of the Meitar Collection, Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, National Library of Israel).



**Figure 8.16:** (Courtesy of the Meitar Collection, Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, National Library of Israel).



The mass rally of the Herut movement in Jerusalem on January 7, 1952



Figure 8.17: (Courtesy of the Menachem Begin Heritage Center).



Figure 8.18: (Photographer: David Rubinger).



**Figure 8.19:** Protest placards, which were seized by the police during the January 7th demonstration. The caricature on the drawn placard depicts West Germany's Chancellor Adenauer, with Hitler's image in the background, handing over reparations' payments to Israel's Prime Minister Ben Gurion. The German money is dripping with the blood of the Jewish Holocaust victims. Beneath this placard another protest sign appears with the following sentence written on it: "The bankrupt Mapai government – seeks to be saved with the shameful reparations". The third protest sign is a cloth cutting in the shape of a yellow patch. Below the badge the following caption appears: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee". (Courtesy of the Israel Police Heritage Center).



**Figure 8.20:** Police officers who were injured during the January 7th demonstration resting at the district police headquarters in Jerusalem. (Courtesy of the Israel Police Heritage Center).