



PERES ARRIVAL—Israeli industrialist Dov Lautman, a longtime supporter of peace projects between Israelis and Arabs, turns in his wheelchair to get a glimpse of Israel's President Shimon Peres (behind him in dark suit and red tie) as he enters the Peres Peace House dinner to fanfare.

THE JEWISH CITIZEN

Peres Peace House inaugurated during center's 10th anniversary

By Donald H. Harrison



TEL AVIV—Among an international gathering of his friends and admirers, Israel's President Shimon Peres on Sunday night attended ceremonies inaugurating the yet unfinished structure that will be known as the Peres Peace House in a mixed Jewish-Arab neighborhood of Jaffa overlooking the Mediterranean.

Intended to be the home for a large library of materials on peace-making from all over the world, the multi-story glass and concrete structure also will become the equivalent of an American presidential library, serving as a repository for the documents developed during Peres' long service to Israel, starting before the war of Independence and continuing through terms as the director general of the defense ministry, various Cabinet positions, foreign minister, twice as prime

minister, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and now as president.

Moreover, the structure designed by Italian architect Massimiliano Fuksas will be headquarters for citizen to citizen peacemaking efforts among Israelis and Palestinians in such diverse fields as agriculture, sports, medical training and journalism. The buildings exterior features walkways that take advantage of both land and sea views, and there will be a peace garden and sitting area. The land was provided by the municipality of Tel Aviv, whose mayor Ron Huldai participated in the evening's festivities.



Even though the building is not yet finished--and is not expected to be occupied until sometime next year during the city of Tel Aviv's centennial celebrations--the ceremony was timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary meeting of the non-governmental organization known as the Peres Peace Center, which was started by Peres during a period when he was out of the government.

That conference, which began on Sunday and concludes on Tuesday, has thus far attracted to the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv more than 1,000 participants including some 300 international visitors, 600 Israelis and about 100 Palestinians.

At last night's steak and lamb dinner held in a large tent just outside the Peres Peace House, Ron Pundak, executive director of the Peres Peace Center, gave special recognition to such financial supporters there present as Broadcom founder Eli Broad of Los Angeles; Pierre Besnainou, former president of the European Jewish Congress and Zev Furst, chairman of the Peres Peace Center's Board of Governors and CEO of Fort Lee, New Jersey-based First International Resources.

A contingent from San Diego includes San Diego State University President Stephen Weber, who sits on the Peres Peace Center's board of directors; Sandy Ehrlich, Qualcomm executive director of the Entrepreneurial Management Center at San Diego State University; Bonnie Stewart, executive director of the Hansen Institute for World Peace, which is in partnership with the Peres Peace Center in projects to foster cooperation in agriculture among Arabs and Israelis, and Marvin Spira, a consultant to the Hansen Institute who specializes in bringing food products to market.

Stewart participated in a Monday morning panel of the Peres Peace Center on agricultural cooperation. The Hansen Institute has been working in concert with olive growers in the Palestinian Authority and in Israel to develop a blended olive oil to market. Cooperative efforts for producers of other agricultural products may ensue.

Additionally attorney Tony Dimitroff, trustee of the Hansen Foundation, which provided the seed money for the Hansen Institute's Middle East peace project, is in attendance at the meeting along with his wife, Gail.



SAN DIEGANS ABROAD—Sharing a moment at the board of governors meeting at the Peres Peace Center's 10th anniversary conference in Tel Aviv are, from left, San Diego State University President Stephen Weber; Hansen Foundation Trustee Tony Dimitroff; Hansen Institute Executive Director Bonnie Stewart; international food marketing consultant Marvin Spira, and Qualcomm Executive Director Sandy Ehrlich of SDSU's Entrepreneurial Management Center.

Uri Savir, who had been a negotiator for Israel in the beginning stages of the Oslo agreement when Peres was Israel's foreign minister, provide

d much of the commentary at both the dinner and the preceding meeting of the Peres Peace Center's Board of Governors at the Dan Hotel.

Savir told the delegates that peace no longer is something that can be imposed by a strong power on a weak one. Although one country may be more powerful than another, the weaker power still can find ways to wreak devastation on the stronger, he said, citing the example of the 9/11 attacks planned by Al Qaeda in the caves of Afghanistan against the United States, a super power.

Not even agreements reached through negotiations between governments can guarantee peace, Savir added. The crucial element, he said, is for a majority of the populations on both sides of the conflict to desire peace. Such majorities can be built through cooperative projects such as those fostered by the Peres Peace Center, he said.

Amplifying on Savir's theme, Pundak said the Peres Peace Center has "dozens and dozens of projects" bringing together in cooperative efforts, Israelis and Palestinians, Israelis and Egyptians and Israelis and Jordanians.

He said there are "people-to-people" programs for Israeli and Palestinian architects, educators, and students; "capacity-building" programs in which Israelis share their knowledge in medical services; agriculture; economics, and business. He said these are not patronizing interactions, from up to down, but rather situations in which Israelis figuratively look Palestinians straight in the eye, knowing that while Israeli knowledge temporarily may be greater, sharing is "with the hope that they will soon become equal."

The most important changes, he said, are in the education of youngsters on both sides of the Israel-Palestine dividing lines, "because we are being educated to hate each other... because we don't know each other."

Saman Khoury, Palestinian Co-Chair of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum and general manager of the Peace and Democracy Forum, told delegates that he was glad to be "among friends" in Tel Aviv, a feeling which he said once would have been almost unimaginable. He expressed belief that the process of peace will be expedited by "doing joint projects together--and I insist on the word 'joint,' regardless of what those projects are."

Although there are frequent political setbacks, such as the takeover by Hamas of Gaza and the political instability of Israel's government hampering decision-making, Khoury said he believes that one day there will be an independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a free, independent state of Israel with West Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, he said, he believes that someday those two states may voluntarily decide to merge into a single entity in search of a more prosperous future.

"The peace that we are looking for is one that will end the occupation that started in 1967, that will establish the Palestinian State next to the State of Israel." He said such a peace not only would free Arabs from occupation but would free Israelis from the "burden of being occupiers."

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