



Special Supplement

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ELECTION ANALYSIS: LABOR MAY NOW BE DEPENDENT ON THE NRP IF IT WISHES TO FORM ANOTHER GOVERNMENT COALITION WITHOUT THE INCLUSION OF LIKUD

By David Landau, JTA Jerusalem Bureau Chief

JERUSALEM, Jan. 1 (JTA) -- A relatively small drop for Labor, a relatively minor increase for Likud--and the upshot is enormously increased political power for the National Religious Party which neither dropped nor increased but maintained its 12 Knesset seats. Such are the vagaries of Israel's multi-party politics that this peculiar sounding assessment is in fact the basic outcome of Monday's national election. In simple terms, the Labor Alignment will probably (final results are not known yet and things may still change) be dependent upon the NRP to an unprecedented extent if it wishes to form another government coalition without the inclusion of Likud.

Or--looked at from another angle--Labor will probably not be able to form a majority coalition relying only on the Independent Liberals, the Arab pro-Labor affiliates, and Shulamit Aloni's Civil Rights List. Such a coalition would not top 60 seats--or would only just top 60, making it unsafe and unstable. With the NRP too, on the other hand, Labor would have a comfortable 70-plus and would command a strong government and be able to face the enhanced Likud opposition. A great deal, then, will hinge upon the NRP's position in the horse-trading which will now begin with the aim of establishing the new government. Labor itself seems divided as to its evaluation of the NRP's likely pose. While the Labor Party election campaign manager Avraham Offer spoke on TV of the likelihood of new elections soon because, in his view, Labor had not been given a strong enough mandate, the party's Secretary-General, Aharon Yadlin, sounded confident that Labor would be able to continue in harness with the NRP, the ILP and Shulamit Aloni.

Clearly, at any rate, Labor is going to try to re-form the present coalition. Clearly, too, the bargaining with NRP will be tougher than ever--because of the new balance of power, and also because of NRP's declared hawkish policies on the West Bank territorial issue. The NRP is committed to the electorate not to join a government whose policy is to redivide western Palestine--in other words to return some of the West Bank to the Arabs. Religious and historical considerations play the major part in this NRP position.

Can Labor woo NRP to its corner? That key question depends on many factors. One of them is the personality factor: Who is to be the real Labor leadership and who the NRP leadership? The religious party is much closer on the issues of borders and defense to Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Premier Golda Meir than to the newly-strong Labor doves led by Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, Deputy Premier Yigal Allon and Foreign Minister Abba Eban. Which Labor team will emerge now as the real guiding force within Labor and the real spokesman of its policies? This question itself is intimately bound up with the election results--and with Labor's reinforced dependency on NRP. If Labor had triumphed in the polls, there is little doubt that it would have shifted further to the left and perhaps even forced Dayan out. As it is, though, Labor needs Dayan and his ex-Rafites in order to keep above water. Hence Dayan, because of Labor's drop in the polls, would seem to have emerged with his position inside the party strengthened.

This is particularly the case when it is borne in mind that the various Left-of-Labor fringe group peace parties did not put up much of a showing. The doves in Labor can hardly claim that the elections demonstrated a significant swing to the minimalist policies of the doves inside and outside the Labor party. Assuming then that the Dayan-Golda camp in Labor is strengthened by the party's weakening, and that this line will continue to guide Labor, will NRP allow itself to be wooed into a coalition under this leadership? Of course, NRP would ask and receive a heavy price in terms of religious arrangements--sabbath, education, etc., etc.

Usually, that is enough, but this time it may not be--because NRP itself is by no means united and there are hawkish pressures within that party which constantly push the leadership towards a harder and harder line on the territorial question. Dr. Yosef Burg and Michael Hazani, the present NRP leaders, might well wish to compromise with Labor and reform the traditional coalition. They might seek to accept Labor's formulations regarding the West Bank such as the Jordan River as the "security border", or a federation of confederation scheme designed to include Jewish settlements in historic areas and military security without necessarily seeking political sovereignty over the whole West Bank. The NRP's internal "opposition," Dr. Yitzhak Rafael's young faction led by Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben-Meir, might very well spurn all such compromise and insist that the NRP as a whole remain firm in its pre-election demand for a "national emergency cabinet" to embrace Likud, too.

The NRP's immediate post-election statements, apart from obvious satisfaction that the party retained its strength, adopted a hard line with Burg calling for a national emergency coalition. Ex-Rafi Minister Shimon Peres early this morning seemed to forecast the hectic days and weeks ahead when he predicted "great difficulties" for Labor in setting up a coalition this time. But he hoped it would be possible, and it was clear that Labor's first move would be to attempt it. Mrs. Meir is bitterly opposed to a national unity Cabinet which she feels would be hopelessly para-

lyzed at Geneva and would inevitably result in the conference failing to achieve anything. One further point: Yadin clearly ruled out today the possibility of bringing Moked or any of the other far-left groups into the coalition. Moked will certainly have one Knesset seat and perhaps two, and possibly some other leftist list might attain the one percent minimum--but Labor does not want to rely on them.

ISRAELI ELECTIONS WEIGH HEAVILY OVER GENEVA CONFERENCE

By Edwin Eytan, JTA European Bureau Chief

GENEVA, Jan. 1 (JTA)—The Israeli elections loom over the Geneva conference. The political talks at ministerial or even ambassadorial level have been adjourned till the second half of January and the military negotiators discuss, according to their own communiques, "principles" more than concrete disengagement means. All the delegations still present in Geneva, mainly middle echelon officials, realize that nothing serious can happen and no break-through can be achieved till the elections are over and a new government is formed.

It is a strange sight to see the offices of the Egyptian delegation here strewn with Israeli foreign language publications as officials and newsmen follow the latest Israeli electoral developments. On most desks at the Egyptian delegation one can see copies of French and English-Israeli dailies as well as cuttings from the wire services reporting Israeli electoral promises, pledges, and returns. Egyptian newsmen talk fluently, somewhat like their Israeli counterparts, about the chances of the Likud and the number of seats the "Maarakh" Alignment might lose. Some of them question Israeli colleagues about the influence of the "Tel Aviv Gush", the weight of Deputy Premier Yigal Allon within Mapai inner circles and Menachem Begin's chances to join a national coalition government.

Even the Russians seem to follow, though with a certain naivety, Israeli internal politics. The Russians seem strangely misinformed about Israel's political system and Soviet newsmen here persistently ask about the chances for a "left bloc" victory which would bring to power Rakah (the pro-Moscow Israeli Communist Party) and other small left-wing groups such as Moked and the Matzpen group. Most Soviet newsmen and officials at the Geneva Conference seem to hold their knowledge about Israel's political life from a couple of Soviet official publications dealing with the Middle East. To many observers it seems as if the Russians are the victims of their own propaganda.

Even the Americans follow the elections but seem to base their knowledge on professional reports. The American delegation receives a daily analysis of electoral developments from its Tel Aviv Embassy and from the State Department in Washington. Many of the American officials also have a first hand knowledge of Israel and the Middle East, having served or visited the area at one point or other of their career. Obviously the Israelis have a double interest in the elections: first, as participants in their country's life and future; and secondly, realizing as delegates that all talks and discussions in Geneva can only deal with generalities and "principles" till the formation of the new government and the promulgation of its broad political lines.

The Egyptians seem well aware of this handicap and last Friday agreed to hold the next meeting of the military delegations only in the afternoon of Jan. 2 when the electoral results will be in. Shortly before leaving Geneva, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy met for over two hours with the deputy head of the Soviet Delegation, Ambassador Vladimir Vinogradov. According to Egyptian sources here, the Soviet diplomat advised the Egyptians to show "patience and realism" till after the Israeli election and not press for a decision on the disengagement issue till then. He reportedly told Fahmy that it would be useless for the Egyptians to press for a solution as nothing can be done before. At the same time he promised a clean-cut Soviet intervention should the issue not be solved by the middle of Jan. He did not specify whether the Soviet intervention would be direct or would work through Washington.

Egyptian circles here say that as from the next meeting, tomorrow, the Egyptian delegation will step up its pressure. Though the talks deal officially with military matters "disengagement and the separation of forces" along the Suez Canal, the Egyptians plan to turn this issue into a political one. The Egyptian thesis is that it is all part of Resolution 338 which, in turn, has been voted by the Security Council within the framework of Resolution 242. For the Egyptians, disengagement is synonymous with withdrawal. The Israeli delegation in Geneva, consisting of Maj. Gen. Mordechai Gur, Col. Dov Sion and Foreign Ministry aide David Ramit, will probably receive new instructions from Israel's next government. Should the Israeli political situation remain basically unchanged after the elections, the delegation is expected to ask for Egyptian concessions on the basis of reciprocity.

Israeli officials who were in Geneva with Foreign Minister Abba Eban at the time of the plenary conference, indicated at the time that Israel will probably ask as a first step for the following Egyptian concessions: The demilitarization of the Sinai or at least of the territories from which Israel will withdraw as well as a limitation of Egyptian troops on the Eastern Bank of the Canal; the reopening of the Suez Canal to the international shipping with clearance work to start at the earliest; and repopulation of the abandoned Egyptian "ghost" cities along the canal, such as Suez and Port Said. The Israelis seem to think that these last two points would prevent, or at least complicate, new Egyptian attacks across the Canal entailing major human and financial risks. Meanwhile Israeli and Egyptian officers meet at the Palais des Nations. This week things will probably return to normal as the real negotiation will start.