



# daily news bulletin

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## KATZIR ASKS RABIN TO FORM CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL GOVERN ISRAEL UNTIL MAY ELECTIONS

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA)--President Ephraim Katzir met with Premier Yitzhak Rabin for less than an hour this morning and asked him to form a caretaker government to govern Israel until elections next May. The request was little more than a formality. The Knesset is expected to officially approve an early election date and vote to dissolve itself long before expiration of the 21-day period within which Rabin must select a new Cabinet. Under the law, the existing government automatically becomes the caretaker regime once the Knesset is dissolved.

Following the meeting at the President's residence, Katzir said he had acted according to the law which required him to consult with representatives of all Knesset factions on the formation of a new government after the Rabin government resigned last month. He said that "after consultations" he had decided to ask MK Rabin to form a new government.

Rabin thanked Katzir and said he would try to assemble a government that would win the confidence of the Knesset. He noted at the same time that all factions support the dissolution of the present Knesset and early elections. Several bills to that effect are under consideration by the Knesset's committee on law and constitution and the adoption of one or more is virtually certain. The Knesset is expected to select May 17 as election day. That date has been agreed to by the Labor Alignment and Likud, the two largest parties.

## OFER'S DEATH STUNS OFFICIAL CIRCLES

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Funeral services will be held here tomorrow for Avraham Ofer who committed suicide yesterday. Ofer, who was Minister of Housing, will be buried at the Kiryat Shaul cemetery with the full honors accorded a Cabinet member. His body will lie in state at the Tel Aviv Municipality building before the funeral procession.

Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren swept aside halachic problems affecting a suicide and decreed that Ofer's remains could be interred in the customary gravesite. According to religious law, persons who take their own lives must be buried in an isolated grave, but Goren found exceptions in rabbinical rulings of the past.

Ofer's death stunned official circles in Jerusalem and caused Premier Yitzhak Rabin to defer a meeting with President Ephraim Katzir last night after hearing the news. Katzir postponed till today to ask Rabin to form a new government to act as a caretaker regime until elections this May.

Rabin and his wife were among the long procession of government officials, friends and associates of Ofer who visited his Tel Aviv flat last night to offer condolences to his widow and children. Others, included Defense Minister Shimon Peres and Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz. Ofer had been the target of accusations that he

engaged in illegal activities while president of the Histadrut housing company, Shikun Ovdim, before he joined the Rabin Cabinet in 1974.

None of the allegations was proven, but a police investigation reportedly was in progress. Ofer left a suicide note declaring his innocence of any wrong-doing. His final words were "I have no doubt that my innocence will be proven.... But I cannot wait for that day, I can bear no more."

Only a few days ago he had confided to a friend that most of his friends and associates were avoiding him since the allegations were published in the press. He also said the slow pace of the investigation, which he was sure would clear his name, gave him a feeling of helplessness.

## Press Blamed For Tragedy

Last night many of the persons who Ofer said had shunned him were seen entering his apartment to offer condolences. Newsmen were barred. One reporter who tried to enter the apartment was forcibly ejected amid shouts of "You journalists killed him."

The Israeli press, always tenacious in its pursuit of scandal in high places, devoted considerable space in recent weeks to the allegations against Ofer. This caused Rabin to remark, at a Bank of Israel meeting only a few hours before Ofer's suicide yesterday, that in Israel a man is innocent unless otherwise proven. And Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, in a speech to Haifa Technion students at about the same time, declared that, "with all due respect to the press, we shall not let it be the judge."

## Account-Of-Last-Hours

According to police accounts, Ofer shot himself at about 6 p.m. local time yesterday with a .22 caliber pistol. His body was found slumped in the seat of his Volvo car parked near a lonely stretch of beach north of Tel Aviv by a passerby who summoned police. Fishermen on the beach did not hear the shot, apparently because it was drowned out by the noise of wind, rain and heavy breakers.

Ofer left Jerusalem at about 10 a.m. yesterday after cancelling his appointments which included a meeting with the Austrian ambassador. His driver took him to Tel Aviv early in the afternoon where he was interviewed on the Army Radio Station, Galei Zahal. He spent some time at his home and then had his driver take him some distance north of Tel Aviv. He dismissed the driver with instructions to wait for a telephone call. After that, police said, Ofer drove to the isolated beach, closed all the windows of his car and shot himself in the head.

## BRITAIN RELEASES SECRET DOCUMENTS RELATING TO PALESTINE 30 YEARS AGO

LONDON, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The British government has released hitherto secret documents related to the Palestine situation 30 years ago, including Cabinet papers of the Labor government headed by Prime Minister Clement Attlee. They show that the Attlee government made

strenuous efforts to avoid antagonizing the Arab states in face of strong Jewish pressure for immigration and independence in Palestine. At the same time, Attlee himself sought to retain the good will and cooperation of moderate Zionist leaders.

A number of documents not released last week-end, among them records of Cabinet deliberations, have been withheld on grounds that they are still too sensitive for publication. These are said to include Cabinet discussions of a proposal to arrest ships at sea carrying illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine. They will not be made public for another 20 years.

Two former members of the Attlee government, Lord Shinwell, who was Minister of Fuel in 1946, and Christopher Mayhew, who was Parliamentary Secretary of the Foreign Office headed by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, differed yesterday over the reasons why some of the Cabinet papers were not released after expiration of the mandated 30-year period covering classified documents. Shinwell said this was probably in order to protect the reputation of the late Mr. Bevin against revelations that might imply that he had acted in a criminal fashion with respect to Palestine.

But Mayhew, long a supporter of the Arab cause and now a member of the Liberal Party, did not think the suppressed papers would show any evidence against Bevin. He claimed they were withheld "because they revealed the unusual forms of pressure, including assassination threats, which Zionists used at that time against British ministers, including Mr. Bevin and myself." He said that at least one person believed responsible for the pressure now holds a high position in Israel and the government wants to avoid offending Israel or its supporters in Britain.

Lord Shinwell said on a radio interview that when the full documents are released "people will be startled because they are a bit distasteful, a bit distressful."

#### Some Information Disclosed

The papers made public record the effects of the dynamiting of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946 which took the lives of 91 persons--British, Arabs and Jews. The blast, attributed to the underground Irgun, aimed at the British Mandatory government offices then located in a wing of the hotel. It precipitated two frantic Cabinet meetings in London where proposals made included levying a half million Pound Sterling fine on the entire Jewish community in Palestine, a complete ban on Jewish immigration and disarming all Jews.

However, Attlee counseled against extreme action and won the Cabinet's support for his view that it would have totally alienated the moderate Zionist leadership, the released documents show.

#### PLO ACCUSES 'ZIONIST AGENTS' OF KILLING PALESTINIAN MILITANT

PARIS, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A pro-Palestinian militant, shot to death by two unidentified gunmen in the Latin Quarter last night, was identified as Mahmoud Ould Saleh, 38, from Mauritania. He managed an Arab book store and was a supporter of the extremist Palestinian "rejection front," a group that refuses any compromise with Israel. The killers escaped. The Palestine Liberation Organization today accused "Zionist agents" of murdering Saleh as part of "a huge plot to liquidate the Palestinian revolution."

Police said Saleh was gunned down while he was closing the shutters of the book store. He was the fourth Palestinian extremist killed in Paris since 1972 when the PLO's representative in France, Mahmoud Hamshari, died when a booby-trapped telephone exploded in his home. Saleh temporarily took over Hamshari's duties until the appointment of Ezzedine Kalak, manager of the PLO information and liaison office here.

Kalak himself narrowly escaped death when a time bomb, concealed in a parcel, was defused before it exploded. Other Palestinians slain here in recent years were Algerian-born Mohamed Boudia, an El Fatah militant who was blown up in his car, and Basil Kubaisi, who was shot to death in a street.

#### RECORD TOTAL OF \$311 M PRODUCED IN 1976 BY ISRAEL BOND ORGANIZATION

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A record-breaking total of \$311 million in cash, the largest figure in its history, with the exception of the Yom Kippur War year of 1973, was produced by the Israel Bond Organization in 1976 to help finance Israel's economic development program, it was announced today by Michael Arnon, president of the Israel Bond Organization.

The 1976 result exceeded by 12 percent the \$277 million realized in 1975 by the organization in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, and other parts of the free world. Since 1951, when the State of Israel floated its first Bond issue in the United States, the Israel Bond Organization has channeled a total of more than \$3.5 billion into the Development Budget for the expansion of industry and the development of every other phase of Israel's economy, Arnon said.

In analyzing last year's results, he said that "while the Jewish communities have been the backbone of our program, registering a constantly rising degree of intensive activity year after year in the purchase and sale of Israel Bonds, 1976 witnessed an unusual increase in the participation of banks, labor unions and the general business community which helped to put our receipts substantially over the \$300 million mark." Banks and other institutional investors accounted for at least a quarter of the total receipts last year.

"The substantial increase in the involvement of banks and other institutional investors in the Israel Bond program," Arnon continued, "represents a very significant expression of confidence in Israel's economic achievements and its potential for continued growth in the future." He reported that Israel has to date repaid \$1.5 billion in the redemption of Israel Bonds.

Declaring that no time must be lost in meeting Israel's needs this year, Arnon announced that the 1977 campaign would have its first national inaugural meeting in Washington Jan. 9, when top community leaders from the U.S. and Canada will confer with Israel Ambassador Simcha Dinitz. This meeting will be followed by the 1977 Prime Minister's Israel Bond Conference in Jerusalem Jan. 25 to Feb. 1.

#### HERUT CONCLAVE BEGINS TO ORGANIZE FOR LIKUD VICTORY IN NEXT ELECTIONS

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Herut convention, which had a festive ceremonial opening in Jerusalem last night, settled down to work here this morning. Its first order of business was to

organize for a Likud victory in next May's elections when the opposition hopes to unseat the governing Labor Party for the first time in the history of the State. Herut is one of the major components of Likud.

The opening speaker, Gen. (Res.) Ezer Weizman, the newly elected Likud campaign manager, exuded confidence while he cautioned against over-confidence. The road to victory is not easy, he told his party colleagues. "You must work for victory as if victory is certain but in the knowledge that it is hard to achieve," he said. He stressed that Likud must select only its best candidates for the Knesset and municipalities lists. "Think hard who you will be sending to the Knesset," he declared.

But Weizman spoke, in the main, as if a Likud-led government was a foregone conclusion. He cautioned U.S. President-elect Jimmy Carter to take into account that if he meets in Washington with Premier Yitzhak Rabin in April, Rabin will be out of a job a month later and Israel will have a Likud government. He also warned Carter not to try to influence Israel's elections as he alleged Rabin had done in the U.S. elections last November.

Likud has yet to hammer out its election platform. Weizman's speech contained several surprises, however. While stressing that the Judea and Samaria regions (West Bank) were not negotiable; he supported territorial concessions on the Golan Heights and in Sinai in exchange for a true peace. He and Likud MK Chaim Landau also called for election reforms, a subject never previously raised at a Herut convention. They said the present system was unfit and must be revised. MK Yoram Aridor, head of the Likud faction in Histadrut, discussed economic and social problems.

#### ZOA CALLS FOR CLARIFICATION OF BLUMENTHAL'S POSITION ON THE MIDEAST AND THE ARAB BOYCOTT

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Zionist Organization of America has called for "clarification" of the position of Secretary of the Treasury-designate W. Michael Blumenthal on the Middle East and the Arab boycott of Israel on grounds that the Bendix Corp. which he headed may have participated in the boycott through one of its foreign subsidiaries.

Rabbi Joseph P. Sternstein, president of the ZOA, said in a statement today that the organization wanted clarification from both Blumenthal and President-elect Jimmy Carter "in light of the decisive voice Blumenthal can be expected to have in government policy on the boycott, his reported continued association with the Bendix Corporation and the questions raised by the employment policies of Bendix-Siyanco."

The latter is a foreign subsidiary, half owned by Bendix and half by the Saudi Arabian government which is under contract to supply the Saudian army with \$67 million worth of training, support and materiel.

According to Sternstein, "During the campaign, President-elect Carter stated that as President he would decisively oppose participation of American business firms in the Arab boycott. However, Blumenthal's record as chairman of a company which aggressively expanded its overseas sales under his guidance and which has possibly through its subsidiaries, participated in the boycott, calls for some clarification."

The Washington Post reported Saturday that

Blumenthal would be questioned during his Senate confirmation hearings on allegations that employment application forms for Bendix-Siyanco projects in Saudi Arabia required "proof of religion" in the form of a baptismal certificate "for a properly executed letter of faith by a chaplain of your choice." At a House hearing in 1975, Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal (D. NY) noted that this was in violation of federal law, regulations and government policy.

#### Complaints Were Filed

In June, 1975, two Jewish applicants filed complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission charging that they were barred from employment by Bendix-Siyanco because they were Jews. The complaint was filed on their behalf by the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League. Justin Finger, assistant director of the ADL's civil rights division, was quoted by the Post as saying that while Bendix does not control the Saudi government, it was not a Bendix function "to handle discriminatory activity for the Saudi Arabians."

Finger added that the case in question was likely to be settled and that Bendix had since removed the religious question from its application forms and adopted an affirmative action program policy for the Saudian project.

The Post also quoted a Bendix spokesman as saying that Bendix had merely transmitted instructions from the Saudian government and withdrew the religious question before the ADL complaint. According to the Post, the spokesman described Blumenthal as "entirely opposed to discrimination." The Post said Bendix has been "studiously neutral" in the Middle East conflict. It manufactures antennas for Hawk missiles which the U.S. sells to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Blumenthal, whose parents were Jewish, converted to Presbyterian some years ago. He has been quoted as urging the U.S. to halt arms shipments to the Middle East because "arming these nations is a foolish policy for which we and they will ultimately pay a price measured in blood."

#### JNF COMMEMORATES GEORGE ELIOT

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A grove of 1000 trees has been dedicated by the Jewish National Fund in memory of the British Victorian novelist George Eliot (nom de plume of Marian Evans-Cross 1819-1880). The grove is in the International Women's Forest in the Galilee. In her book, "Daniel Deronda," George Eliot spoke out in favor of what is in effect the thesis of political Zionism, affirming the right of the Jewish people to return to their ancient homeland. Attending the dedication ceremony were British Ambassador and Mrs. John Mason and Dr. Israel Goldstein. The latter represented the JNF Directorate.

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WARSAW (JTA)--The well-known West German film director Theodor Kotula is shooting a film in Auschwitz titled "The Life of a German Man." It deals with the life at the Auschwitz concentration camp in all its terrible details. The main advisor is Kazimierz Smolen, director of the Auschwitz Museum who was himself a prisoner at the camp.

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**RESOLUTION ON SOVIET JEWISH  
DROPOUTS OFFERS EXTENSIVE  
SUGGESTIONS ON COPING WITH TREND**

ENGLEWOOD, N.J., Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Russian Absorption Committee of the United Jewish Fund of Englewood and Surrounding Communities has adopted a resolution expressing concern about "the increase in the number of Soviet Jews receiving exit visas who opt to come to the United States instead of Israel" and suggesting a "guide to reverse the trend of destination so that a larger number of (Soviet) Jews make aliya to Israel."

George Hantgan, executive director of the UJF, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the resolution, unanimsously adopted two weeks ago, grew out of concern by local UJF members and himself about the increasing percentage of Soviet Jews who have opted to come to countries other than Israel. He noted that this concern was voiced by UJF board members and himself at "professional," "lay and professional" and "lay" meetings on Soviet Jewish emigration.

"Our Russian Absorption Committee has felt that all the information we have on this problem has only attacked the surface manifestations and not enough positive steps have been taken on a national and international basis," Hantgan said. He stated that it is the committee's hope that "more communities will use the resolution as a starting point of suggestions. We recognize that the document is not a cure-all, but aspire for further discussion and refinement throughout this country and Israel. If the process results in positive steps to increase aliya to Israel, while still holding to the principle of 'freedom of choice,' then we will be satisfied."

**Steps To Be Taken**

The resolution, which supports and reaffirms the belief that every Soviet Jew has the right to emigrate and receive the necessary documents enabling him to do so without hindrance, suggests as a first step that "Soviet Jews exiting the USSR shall stop for one day only in Vienna and shall then be flown directly to Israel, there to be housed in an absorption center until their final plans are made." This will, in effect, the resolution notes, deprive the Soviet Union of one excuse to curtail Soviet Jewish emigration.

Once in Israel, every creative approach should be used to make aliya attractive, "including constructive attempts through seminars and other experiences to give Soviet Jews a background on Israel, Jewish identity and Jewish culture." Even Jews who decide immediately to apply for visas to other countries "shall be encouraged and given an opportunity to travel throughout Israel in order to become familiar with the country and people," the resolution continues. "American Jewish communities (should) earmark some of the funds they now expend on Russian absorption to go to each Soviet Jewish family who decides to stay in Israel. This must be in the form of an additional grant."

If the family desires to go to another country, after this experience in Israel, and that country is the United States, "it be made clear to the family that limited grants and loans will be made available by the American Jewish community. An attempt to standardize grants for each family ought to be made on a national and regional basis," the resolution states.

If these steps are undertaken, the resolution notes, Israel will have an additional opportunity

to encourage aliya; "the monies now spent on the 'holding period' in Rome will be expended in Israel which needs this additional income"; and every Soviet Jew, after this "holding period" who still desires to come to the U.S., "will know that his economic status in the U.S. will be no better than if he remains in Israel. Actually, we must make Israel more attractive economically than the U.S. for the Soviet Jews by grants and additional supplements to those remaining in Israel."

The resolution also recommends that a number of steps be taken in line with the committee's recommendations. These include: "For the next three months, the United Jewish Fund will continue to resettle Soviet Jews in the local community while still continuing its obligation to families resettled here"; "Limited grants will be made locally, other costs of resettlement will be in the form of loans" and "The Soviet Jew who opts to come directly to America without even trying to make a go in Israel will no longer have a preferred status over the Soviet Jew who tries to succeed in Israel."

Early this year, the resolution states, the UJF committee will review any changes in the pattern of Soviet Jewish emigration.

**CORRECTION**

In the Jan. 4 issue of the Daily Bulletin, Aharon Yadin was mistakenly identified as the former head of Kupat Holim, the Histadrut sick fund. The former head is Asher Yadin. Aharon Yadin is the Minister of Education.

**SAMUEL SCHRAGE DEAD AT 44**

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Funeral services were held Sunday for Rabbi Samuel Schrage, who achieved the highest posts in city government held by a Lubavitch member as assistant executive director of the New York City Youth Board in 1966 and as director of the city's Neighborhood Action Program (NAP) in 1969. Schrage, who was 44, died last Friday from a heart attack.

The Brooklyn rabbi became known for his organization of the Macabees, a group of young Hasidic Jews who at night rode through the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, home of the world headquarters of the Lubavitcher movement, with radio-equipped cars and large flashlights. The four cars, each manned by six Hasidim, patrolled the 100 square blocks of the area, alerting the police to incidents and aiding victims of street crime when the police were not available. Schrage organized the group in response to muggings of men and women and attacks on Hasidic students.

Schrage was appointed to the city posts by then Mayor John Lindsay. Mayor Abraham Beame dismissed the rabbi from the NAP program in 1974 as one of the city's reactions to its fiscal crisis. Born in Brazil of Polish emigrants, Schrage came to the United States at 14 on a scholarship to attend a rabbinical seminary. Ordained in 1958, he became administrator of the United Lubavitch Yeshivah in Crown Heights.

JERUSALEM (JTA)--Moshe Rivlin, director general of the Jewish Agency, was elected Tuesday as chairman of the Jewish National Fund, succeeding Yaacov Tzur who has retired. Rivlin, who will resign his Agency post, said he saw his main task as head of the JNF to strengthen the ties between Israel and diaspora Jewry.