

JTA daily news bulletin

Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency / 165 West 46th Street / New York, New York 10036

Vol. LVIII - 63rd Year

Tuesday, May 27, 1980

Nb. 100

WEIZMAN'S RESIGNATION CASTS SHADOW OVER LIKUD-LED GOVERNMENT COALITION

But Government Not Seen In Immediate Danger By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA) -- The resignation of Defense Minister Ezer Weizman yesterday cast a shadow over the future of Premier Menachem Begin's Likud-led coalition government. But while the extent of the political fall-out at home and abroad remains to be measured, the consensus in political circles today was that the government is in no immediate danger.

Weizman will hand Begin his official letter of resignation today but will remain in office for another day. He chaired a meeting of the General Headquarters Staff officers this morning to render a final report on the military situation. Afterwards, he had an emotional farewell meeting with his army colleagues.

Weizman's not unexpected departure was generally welcomed by hardliners who resented his frequent public criticism of government policies, especially with regard to West Bank settlements. It was deplored by moderate elements in the Cabinet and Knesset who regarded Weizman as a force for moderation in dealing with the Palestinian issue and an asset in the normalization of relations with Egypt.

There was no official reaction from Cairo, but Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali expressed his personal regrets. (See separate story.)

Battle Looms Between Hawks, Doves

A battle loomed between Cabinet hawks and doves over Weizman's possible successor. But the first political casualty to Likud was a relatively minor one -- the announcement by MK Hillel Seidel, a former Laborite, that he would soon leave the coalition. This will reduce Begin's Knesset majority to 63 seats, still a sufficient margin to function effectively.

Weizman informed Begin of his intention to quit before yesterday's weekly Cabinet session. He announced his resignation in a brief speech to his Cabinet colleagues and left immediately for the Defense Ministry offices in Tel Aviv to clear out his personal effects. Begin is expected to fill the defense post for the time being as he did the Foreign Ministry following the resignation of Moshe Dayan last October.

Weizman had threatened to resign on several occasions in policy disputes with Begin and other ministers. His most recent altercation was with Finance Minister Yigal Hurwitz over the latter's proposal to freeze the budget at its present level -- a move approved by the economic cabinet last week -- which would require cuts in defense expenditures.

Reasons For Resignation

But he told his colleagues yesterday that while this was the immediate issue it was not the sole reason for his resignation. He made it clear that his decision grew out of cumulative dissatisfaction and frustration with the government. In fact, Weizman, in his peroration, lashed out at the government's performance in general, noting that yerida (emigration) is running ahead of immigration, inflation is skyrocketing, policy on the

economic front seemed arbitrary and improvised rather than planned and relations with the U.S. were suffering because of government policies.

Weizman also delivered a bitter attack on Hurwitz and his economic policies. The Israel Defense Force is stronger than any government, he said and would survive the injuries inflicted on it by such as Hurwitz. He accused the Finance Minister of trying to disguise his own failures by blaming the defense establishment for the country's economic woes. Despite the government's efforts, the army is strong, he said. He noted that the exports of military industries netted \$650 million this year and is expected to earn over \$1 billion next year.

It has been an open secret for many months that Weizman was becoming increasingly disenchanted with Begin's policy toward the autonomy talks with Egypt and the U.S. In fact, he had little to do with them until the ill-fated round of talks at Herzliya two weeks ago, after which President Anwar Sadat summarily suspended the negotiations.

In unguarded moments -- of which there have been more than a few of late -- Weizman spoke disparagingly of the government as a whole and of several ministers in particular. He was said to feel that the Cabinet did not sufficiently value the peace with Egypt and that its policy thinking was not sufficiently influenced by the need to build and preserve the peace. Many of Weizman's remarks, reported in the press, drew the wrath of Likud stalwarts, especially those in his own Herut faction.

Weizman Under Fire

The most stinging comment on Weizman's resignation was made by Hurwitz after yesterday's Cabinet meeting. He accused the Defense Minister of "practically expressing non-confidence in the government of which he was a member" and likened him to "a tenant who strikes his neighbor. This is an unbearable situation. Ezer could not be a member of the Cabinet and attack it at the same time, condemn it, mock it, joke about it. . . . With all regret, I can live with his resignation," Hurwitz said.

Haim Kaufman, chairman of the Herut Knesset faction, spoke in a similar vein. "Ezer could not face the pressures of Israeli politics," he said. "He has a different style of work, a different direction, and I believe it was very difficult for him to be a part of the leading team. . . . I would like to see Ezer Weizman as Defense Minister of Israel without trying to be the Prime Minister at the same time," Kaufman said.

Education Minister Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party, expressed the view that Weizman's resignation was unnecessary especially as it came before the full Cabinet reached a decision on the budget freeze to which he objected.

Deputy Premier Yigael Yadin, leader of the Democratic Movement on the other hand, felt the crisis could not have been avoided. The matter was "much more complicated than it seemed," he said. Justice Minister Shmuel Tamir, the No. 2 man in the DM, declared, "I'm sorry that he resigned. Obviously a government without Weizman is not a government with him."

Haim Karfu, chairman of the Likud coalition, admitted that Weizman's resignation weakened the government but observed that "the moment of truth between Weizman and Likud had to come. We now must heal the wounds and get to work."

Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, a Labor MK, predicted that the government would fall as a result of Weizman's resignation. That view was shared by a few others in opposition ranks, but not in the coalition.

Labor MK Yossi Sarid said Weizman's departure made early elections more likely. Shlomit Aloni of the Civil Rights Movement, claimed it was the final nail in the coffin of the Begin government. But MK Shlomo Lorincz of the Aguda faction, said his party would stay in the coalition. "The government could not have continued to function with Weizman undermining its authority," he said.

Not The End Of Political Activities

According to political sources, Weizman will keep his Knesset seat -- to which he was elected on the Herut ticket -- for the time being. But eventually, he is expected to retire to private life and await a different political constellation where his popularity and leadership talents could find new expression, the sources said.

Weizman himself made it clear last night that his resignation did not mean the end of his political activities. Speaking in the parlance of a veteran combat pilot, he told reporters, "This is a touch-down for refueling and rearmament and then to take off once again." The question remained, in which direction he would take off.

He has reportedly expressed willingness to serve as Defense Minister in a Labor-led government headed by Shimon Peres. Peres, chairman of the Labor Party, has not foreclosed that possibility. But much depends on the public reaction to Weizman's resignation in the days ahead.

If the ripples are small and the reactions undramatic, the implication will be that the former fighter pilot and Air Force commander does not have a solid political constituency. If, on the other hand, his departure triggers massive expressions of regret and seriously weakens the government, he will have proven a political force to be reckoned with despite his lack of support in the Herut party machine.

Struggle Over Replacement

Meanwhile, the threat to the Begin regime comes from the possibility of a destructive struggle within his coalition over who will replace Weizman. Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, a Herut hardliner, is known to see himself as a suitable candidate for the post of Defense Minister in view of his extensive military experience.

But the Liberal Party wing of Likud and the Democratic Movement have said in the past that Sharon is not acceptable to them. In the aftermath of Weizman's resignation, spokesmen for both parties said the possibility of Sharon as his successor created "a new situation" but that they would "consult" before adopting a firm position.

Korfu, as coalition chairman, rejected hints from the Liberals that they would like to see one of their own members in the defense slot. He also rejected an implied ultimatum from the DM not to appoint Sharon. "If the Premier finds Arik (Sharon) suitable for the job, there is no reason why he should not get it. His views are irrelevant because policy is determined by the Premier," Korfu said. Sharon himself has refused to comment.

A group of Herut members, including several from Sharon's former Shalom Zion movement, have set up a committee to press for the appointment of Sharon as the new Defense Minister. The commit-

tee has already sent telegrams to all Knesset members urging their support.

Another candidate frequently mentioned is Moshe Arens, chairman of the Knesset's powerful Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. An outspoken Herut hawk, he opposed the Camp David agreements and the peace treaty with Egypt on grounds that Israel's tangible concessions -- the return of Sinai -- were not matched by Egyptian concessions.

Meanwhile, a third candidate entered the field. Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Zipori, who is required by law to tender his resignation along with his chief's, has reportedly claimed that he has the same qualifications as Arens or anyone else for the post. Zipori is expected to be asked by Begin to continue to serve as Deputy Defense Minister until a new Defense Minister is appointed.

Herut insiders indicated that a decision on Weizman's replacement will not be made quickly. Begin waited until March to name Yitzhak Shamir -- another hardliner -- to the post of Foreign Minister which Dayan had vacated the previous October.

ALI AND WEIZMAN REMAIN FRIENDS

By Yitzhak Shargil and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA) -- Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali expressed deep regret over the resignation of Ezer Weizman as Defense Minister of Israel. Ali, who until recently was Egypt's Defense Minister, said he regarded Weizman as his personal friend and attempted to reach him by telephone yesterday.

Weizman, winding up his affairs at the Defense Ministry, returned the call last night. The Egyptian general told him, "We were friends and we remain friends. Your contribution to the peace cause was enormous." He invited Weizman and his wife, Reuma, to visit Cairo and Weizman said he might accept the invitation shortly.

But apart from that exchange, there was no public comment by any Egyptian leader on Weizman's resignation and none is known to have sent messages to the departing Israeli defense chief.

Cairo refrained from an official reaction pending "clarification of the picture," according to Ehud Yaari, the Israel Broadcasting Authority correspondent in the Egyptian capital. The Egyptian press devoted little space to Weizman's departure and Yaari reported that he was prevented from soliciting reactions from "the man in the street," an indication that the Egyptian government wants no hint of reaction to be made public at this time.

There was good reason to believe, however, that the Egyptians are unhappy over this latest development in Israel. President Anwar Sadat established especially close relations with Weizman since the Camp David meetings in September, 1978 and during the tortuous peace process which unfolded thereafter. Similar relations developed between Weizman and Ali and Ali's predecessor as Defense Minister, Gen. Mohammed Gamassy.

Ali and Weizman appeared to have found a common language and genuine mutual regard. Each was appointed by his respective government to be in charge of the normalization process and under their direction it achieved remarkable progress in a short period of time.

In the past, Sadat is known to have expressed the wish that Weizman would succeed Menachem Begin as Prime Minister. It is believed in fact that the Egyptian leader several times postponed anti-Israel decisions on the assumption that in the future he could reach an understanding with an Israeli

government headed by Weizman.

On the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Weizman's departure was viewed as a set-back. Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem said it was a "major loss for mutual understanding between Jews and Arabs" and a retreat in terms of the political situation. He praised Weizman for his "deep understanding of the Mideast situation."

Mayor Rashad A-Shawa of Gaza also expressed regret over Weizman's resignation. "His resignation indicates that the Israeli government will go more extreme which we certainly object to," he said. He noted that Weizman too had supported Jewish settlements in the occupied territories but regarded him as the proponent of a more moderate line in the Cabinet.

Maj. Saad Haddad, leader of the Israeli-backed Christian militia in south Lebanon said he was saddened by Weizman's resignation. He spoke of his excellent relations with the Defense Minister but expressed confidence that Israel's relations with the Christians in south Lebanon will not change.

WEIZMAN, BEGIN DIFFER ON PEACE MOVES

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA) — Departing Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, in his official letter of resignation today, accused Premier Menachem Begin of throwing away chances for peace. Begin, after receiving the letter tonight, telephoned reporters to tell them, "there is not a scrap of truth in this statement."

In his letter of resignation, Weizman said "you (Begin) were given a rare chance to bring about a new hope amongst our people, but you threw it away." Weizman said that "The people believed in peace and in the government. It is not the people that ceased to believe in peace. . . . Instead of taking steps to encourage and strengthen peace, we are merely marking time."

Begin, who took the unusual step of telephoning Israeli reporters, said that "our negotiating team has carried out the talks in accordance with the Camp David agreement with goodwill and has made unceasing efforts to reach agreement. . . . He said the Egyptian proposals on Jerusalem, security and the nature of autonomy "are a threat to the existence, future and security of Israel" and are to blame in the failure to complete the the autonomy talks.

"Mr. Weizman's accusation that Israel is marking time, as he puts it, after he himself turned down Egypt's proposals on security, are of incalculable gravity," Begin charged.

ISRAELIS COOL TO FAHD'S OFFER

By David Landau and Gif Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA) — Israeli government circles gave a cool reception to Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Fahd's statement that his country would help bring other Arab nations and the Palestinians into "a full and final peace settlement" with Israel if the latter gave its undertaking to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir said today that Israel was ready to negotiate with the Saudis with no preconditions. But he told a group of visiting American Congressmen that there was nothing new in Fahd's statement made in an interview with Katherine Graham, publisher of The Washington Post. According to Shamir, the Saudis have given no indication that they would be prepared to negotiate on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242.

Other Israeli circles dismissed Fahd's offer as "gimmicks" and said similar statements have been made over the years since 1967. They saw "nothing new and nothing serious" in the latest remarks. Fahd's interview with Ms. Graham was published yesterday in The Washington Post.

Post correspondent Jim Hoagland reported from Riyadh that it represented a significant advance because in the past the Saudis had always insisted on a detailed timetable for Israeli withdrawal. Now, according to Hoagland, the Saudi strong man has said "there can be a program for withdrawal to be discussed, to be negotiated." He also endorsed Resolution 242 which no Saudi leader has done so forthrightly in the past, Hoagland said.

Meanwhile, in Cairo, Egyptian Defense Minister Kamal Hassan Ali told reporters that his country's position was not different from that of Saudi Arabia as enunciated by Prince Fahd. "This is a Saudi message to Israel that Arab countries are ready to join the peace talks if Israel is prepared to give up the occupied Arab territories," Ali said.

GERMANY REITERATES SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION

By David Kantor

BONN, May 26 (JTA) — The Foreign Ministry released a statement today reiterating West German backing for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and sharply criticizing Israeli settlement policy in the West Bank. The statement, quoted Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher as saying that next month the nine member countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) will lay down their precise attitude toward the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The move came in the aftermath of the talks between Genscher and the Egyptian Vice President Hosni Mubarak, currently visiting Germany. Sources in Bonn said that Mubarak carried a personal message from President Anwar Sadat of Egypt to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, but they would not describe its content.

Other elements included in the German statement were the need to find a solution to the problem of Jerusalem, the desire for an urgent solution to the conflict and Israel's right to exist. Mubarak reportedly briefed Genscher on the deadlocked autonomy talks.

FEINSTEIN REELECTED UOR PRESIDENT

NEW YORK, May 26 (JTA) — Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada for the past 12 years, was unanimously reelected to another term at the organization's annual convention which opened here yesterday. In his address to the several hundred delegates and visiting rabbis from all over the world, the renowned Torah sage stressed the need for Jewish education to make the Jewish people aware of the vital role of Torah and halacha in their daily lives.

NEWARK (JTA) — A scuffle between Palestinian marchers and a group of Jewish war veterans erupted Sunday when the former grabbed Israeli and American flags, overpowering the blockade set up by state police. The march, held in North Bergen because of its concentration of Palestinians, was to mark International Palestinian Day. Judge Geoffrey Gaulkin of New Jersey Superior Court ruled last Friday that North Bergen officials had unlawfully denied the Palestinians a parade permit. About 800 Palestinian participated in the parade.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES TENSIONS AMONG FRENCH JEWS

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, May 26 (JTA) — Tensions within the French Jewish community have been simmering for a long time. The ingredients consist of suppressed frustrations, intercommunal jealousies and an intense dissatisfaction with the government's anti-Israel policy. On the eve of the Six-Day War, when throngs of Parisian Jews went out into the streets singing Israeli songs and waving Israeli flags, the tensions reached near boiling point, but the lid remained on.

It nearly burst earlier this month as most Jewish communal organizations, including the most prestigious among them, traded mutual accusations, communiques and denials with the Jewish Agency's representative in France, Avi Primor, a 45-year-old Israeli-career diplomat now on leave of absence from the Foreign Ministry.

On Wednesday morning, May 7, Baron Guy de Rothschild, the head of the famous banking family and one of France's best known communal leaders, phoned Primor to ask for an immediate appointment. When the two met, that afternoon, the 71-year-old silver-haired banker, generally elegant and even suave in his approach, told him bluntly: "I have asked my son David (a member of the Jewish Agency's Board of Governors), to telephone (Agency chairman Leon) Dulzín in Jerusalem and ask for your recall."

Basis For Latest Tension

Rothschild blamed Primor for the tone taken by most of the main speakers at the April 27 "12 Hours for Israel" mass demonstration. He said that the demonstration's organizer, a 32-year-old lawyer, Henri Hajdenberg, "had deviated from his course" and instead of attacking the French government's anti-Israel policy — "something we all would have supported" — rapped Jewish communal organizations and their leaders.

Hajdenberg, who heads a newly formed organization, "Jewish Renewal," had said in his opening address that the community leaders were shy, scared and timid in defending Israel's interests and accused the Rothschilds of having taken us on the path of political bankruptcy. "Some 150,000 people," according to the organizers, attended the meeting and most of them wildly cheered Hajdenberg's speech.

He also said at the time that "the Jewish vote" could be decisive in "at least 40 electoral constituencies, 10 of them in Paris alone." He openly called for the creation of a Jewish lobby similar to that existing in the United States.

Rothschild told Primor that the meeting might have been useful but that finally it had mainly served to "break up the community's unity of purpose." He added, "You can rarely win a point for your cause by using insults and invectives."

That same afternoon, Rothschild attended a meeting of the Fonds Social Jufé Unifé (FSJU) executive council. This body is France's social welfare fund and also a half-partner in the French United Jewish Appeal. Its president is Guy de Rothschild.

Press Sensationalizes Situation

Most of the communal leaders present believed that Primor had backed, some reportedly said manipulated, the "Renewal" group. Before the meeting started, a small group of participants asked Rothschild to have it discussed and to vote

a motion of non-confidence in the Jewish Agency's representative.

Rothschild turned down the suggestion and the FSJU meeting finally concluded with a vote expressing the organization's continued confidence in the Representative Council of Major French Jewish Organizations (CRIF), the French equivalent of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The president of CRIF is another Rothschild, Baron Alain, a 70-year-old cousin of Guy and his partner in the bank.

Two days later, the discretion which the French Jewish leadership had hoped to maintain was broken. The Israeli press picked up the story and the French press sensationalized the situation.

France's 700,000 Jews generally prefer, in the words of a prominent French Jewish attorney, for the general press "not to write about us at all, but when it does so, however, to do it in a positive way." Most local Jews must have been bitterly disappointed throughout the month of May. Rarely, if ever, have they and their organizations come under such close scrutiny from the media and the general tone was not always positive.

Provoked by the press, prodded by correspondents, often irritated by their own and their opponents' statements, attacks and public communiques, organizations traded accusations for a couple of weeks. There was a clash of personalities between the elegant world-renowned banker and the Sabra-born former infantry officer twice wounded in the 1956 Suez War. But, basically, it was a clash over conflicting views over diaspora Jewry's duties and responsibilities and many here fear that the French incident might renew itself sooner or later elsewhere, and mainly in the U.S.

Staunchly Pro-Israel

Organized French Jewry and its traditional leadership, have always been pro-Israel, have actively spoken out in Israel's favor, but have generally chosen to do so through direct contacts with the government and in a relatively discreet manner. Many Jews also consider themselves first and foremost French and secondly Jewish.

France's national tendencies have been, since the days of the French Revolution, towards a strong, centralized country. Democracy in French tradition was incompatible with regional tendencies such as had prevailed in the days of the monarchy.

Nowadays, pluralism, in all its forms, is in fashion. France, for the first time in its history, is prepared to accept it in all its manifestations: political, sexual and religious. Now, it seems to many, including Primor, is the ideal time for French Jewry to openly express its differences and its own particular communal sympathies and tendencies. The difference between Primor and the community's traditional leaders is also, however, one of style.

The intercommunal storm and the general press' interest have at least served to clearly demonstrate the community's basic unity in supporting Israel and coming out "into the open" to make known its views and passionate links with the Jewish State. This is probably what will remain once the storm abates.

UNDOF MANDATE EXTENSION DUE

UNITED NATIONS, May 26 (JTA) — Israel and Syria have agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights for another six months, until Nov. 30. The UNDOF, which separates Israeli and Syrian forces on the Heights, was established May 1974.