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BEGIN PROPOSES THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin's latest proposal for a national unity government drew no immediate response from Labor Party chairman Shimon Peres today. Peres, scheduled to address his party's Central Committee tomorrow, is expected to make his position known at that time, after consultations with his Labor Alignment colleagues.

Begin's offer, in a "Dear Shimon" letter to Peres, was made public on Israel Radio today. It followed Peres' rejection of Begin's proposal yesterday that Likud and Labor send a joint Knesset delegation to Washington to explain to the American Administration why Israel regards proposed U.S. sales of mobile air defense systems and F-16 jet fighters to Jordan to be an intolerable threat to its security.

Peres stated that while Labor appreciated the gravity of the threat, it would not be party to any move which suggested that it endorses the Begin government's policies. He proposed instead that a delegation of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, which includes both coalition and opposition factions, go to Washington. That was turned down by Begin.

Begin's Letter To Peres

In his letter to Peres, Begin expressed regret that the Labor Alignment rejected the idea of a joint parliamentary mission. "It is unclear to me why your friends should suspect that a parliamentary mission is a corridor for a national unity government," Begin wrote. "I proposed, and I am still proposing, to form such a government. It is objectively possible to form it."

Begin explained that after Peres announced in the Knesset that Labor supported the autonomy plan, there was a clear basis for cooperation in a national unity government, at least for the five year interim period during which autonomy would be in effect on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We are prepared at any moment to engage in talks for that purpose," Begin wrote. "Although I know that the Alignment Knesset faction decided to refuse even to negotiate this positive idea," if the Alignment dropped its objections, he would invite Peres for immediate negotiations.

Labor Reacts Coolly

Labor has endorsed autonomy in principle, but does not subscribe to the Begin government's version of it. The immediate reaction to Begin's letter within the Labor Alignment was cool, although some Labor hawks thought the idea was at least worth considering. Party Secretary Haim Barlev said he opposed the offer because of the wide differences between the two parties. A similar view was expressed by Mapam Secretary Victor Shem-Tov.

Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who speaks for Labor on foreign policy matters, charged that the only purpose of Begin's letter was to split the Alignment and stifle opposition to Likud policies.

ies. Labor MK Chaim Herzog said he didn't oppose the idea in principle but thought it was not feasible under the present political circumstances. One Labor hawk, Shlomo Hillel, said the offer was "not serious."

But another, Shoshana Arbeli-Almosino, thought the offer should at least be reviewed. Labor dove Yossi Sarid warned that if the Alignment "fell into Begin's trap," nine of its Knesset members would quit the faction -- himself, Shulamit Aloni and the seven Mapam MKs.

Most political observers believe Peres will respond negatively to Begin. The Labor Party leader has made it clear in the past that he would consider a national unity regime only in an emergency and that it would have to entail a major reshuffling of Cabinet posts.

Some pundits said today that if Labor did accept Begin's offer, it would postpone joining the coalition until after Israel completes its withdrawal from Sinai on April 25. It would prefer to let the Likud government deal alone with the difficult problems of withdrawal, they said.

ARENS SAYS ONE OF HIS TASKS IN WASHINGTON IS TO CONVINCE THE U.S. NOT TO SELL ARMS TO ARAB COUNTRIES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- Moshe Arens, making his first public address as Israel's Ambassador to the United States, stressed today that one of his tasks in Washington is to convince the U.S. not to sell sophisticated weaponry to the Arab countries.

Israel, like the U.S., wants the Arab countries to "be inclined towards the West and not toward the East," the envoy told some 800 persons attending the closing day of the International Biennial Convention of B'nai B'rith Women (BBW). "The best way of obtaining that objective is not by selling them more sophisticated arms."

Although Arens did not deal with specifics, the women at the convention who came from throughout the United States, Canada, Israel and Ireland, adopted a resolution expressing to the Reagan Administration, and to Congress the organization's "profound concern with the Administration's Middle East policy of selling arms."

The resolution, which delegates presented to their Senators while visiting them on Capitol Hill yesterday, noted that the Administration sold AWACS to Saudi Arabia and now some Administration officials "propose to sell I-Hawks (missiles) to Jordan, which has never recognized Israel nor the Camp David peace process and which is negotiating with the Soviet Union."

The resolution added: "The deeds of the Administration seem not to match its words that promise to maintain the military edge of Israel in the Middle East, both in terms of quality and quantity of arms." The BBW resolution stressed that the organization believes "the interests of the United States requires maintaining a strong and secure Israel."

In his speech this morning, Arens also stressed that the situation in Lebanon is "not a struggle between left and right," as has been depicted in the U.S., but a "latent and brutal attempt by Syria

and the PLO to take over what once was an independent country." He said the reason they have only been 70 percent successful is due to Israel's help for indigenous forces and because Israel has been a deterrent to both the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syria.

Arens maintained that the U.S. and Israeli objectives and interests are the same. He listed them as the prevention of Soviet penetration into the Mideast; peace, or at least stability in the area; continuation of the oil flow to the industrialized nations; and a strong Israel. But he noted that this "doesn't always mean you agree on how you obtain the objectives" since the two countries have different perceptions. "I will do my level best to close the gap between the perceptions," Arens said.

Says U.S.-Israeli Relations Are Improving

But he stressed that while "we have had many ups and downs" in the U.S.-Israeli relationship since the establishment of the Jewish State, "on the whole, the relationship is getting steadily better."

Arens, who presented his credentials to President Reagan eight days ago, said he will get a "passing grade" if he assures that there is no "misunderstandings" between Israel and the U.S., that both countries know what each others position is. He said he will have done a "good" job if he can bring about an understanding between the two countries and said his work could be considered "excellent" if "I can bring about a measure of agreement."

The former chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee also said he will be devoting a great deal of his time to economic matters, including urging American investment in Israel. He said much of Israel's current economic "burden" is due to the peace process but he was confident that Israel will overcome its economic difficulties. "Israel which has no resources below ground, has resources above ground -- the people of Israel," Arens declared.

Dorothy Binstock Is Now BBW President

At a dinner last night, Dorothy Binstock of Pittsburgh, a member of the organization for more than 40 years, was installed as BBW president for the next two years. At the opening session Sunday night, Beverly Silis, the opera singer and general director of the New York City Opera, was presented the organization's Perlman Award for Human Advancement for her volunteer work to prevent birth defects. Shalom Doren, chairman of the board of the BBW's Childrens Home in Israel, was honored Monday for 30 years service to the home, and Yecheskiel Cohen, the home's director, was honored for 25 years service.

LEADERS OF 120 JEWISH AGENCIES ASSAIL U.S. ARMS SALES TO ARABS

NEW YORK, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- The heads of 108 Jewish community relations councils, in cities across the United States, and 12 major national Jewish community relations agencies, joined in a letter of protest to President Reagan over continuing U.S. arms sales to Arab states, and recent proposals to supply advanced weapons to Jordan, it was announced here today.

The letter to Reagan yesterday was signed by the leaders of all 120 groups, member agencies of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), the national coord-

inating body for the field of Jewish community relations.

In releasing the letter, NJCRAC chairman Bennett Yanowitz noted the growth of Jewish community concern after recent press reports of statements, widely attributed to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, that advocated the sale of F-16 fighter planes and mobile "Hawk" anti-aircraft missiles to Jordan, and that propounded an Administration desire to "redirect" American policy away from Israel toward "friendly" Arab countries.

Alarmed At U.S. Arms Build-Up

The Jewish groups' letter expressed "alarm that the United States, rather than acting to stem the massive arms build-up in the Arab world, continues to be a major purveyor of weaponry." That policy, the letter stated, "endangers peace in the region, threatens the security of Israel, and undermines the long-term interests of the United States."

The Jewish leaders' letter also pointedly asserted that the recent 8.5 billion dollar arms sale to Saudi Arabia, as well as the approach to Jordan, had not yielded any "concessions that advance peace in the Middle East."

The letter charged that "Jordan remains adamant in its rejection of the Camp David framework" as does Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, the letter further charged, "just rejected assurances you gave to the Senate pertaining to the use of the F-15s and AWACS as well as U.S. proposals seeking to strengthen U.S. strategic capabilities in the region."

Urge Unambiguous Support For Allies

In their letter, the Jewish leaders asserted that "it is time to 'redirect' our policy in the Middle East away from the sale of arms to unstable and uncooperative regimes." They called for "a reassertion of unambiguous support for those reliable allies, like Israel, which have demonstrated the sincerity of their desire for peace by negotiating and signing treaties that have entailed great national risk and sacrifice, and which clearly recognize the Soviet-inspired threat to their own and United States' national interests in the region."

In today's letter, the Jewish leaders also referred to Reagan's February 16th communication to Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. They stated they were "gratified" by Reagan's "own deep personal commitment to the security of Israel," and that they were "pleased" that Reagan had "reaffirmed America's unique bond with Israel," and had given assurances of maintaining Israel's "qualitative technological military edge in the region."

SECURITY COUNCIL CANCELS MEETING

UNITED NATIONS, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- A Security Council meeting scheduled for this afternoon to vote on a resolution increasing the number of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) troops was canceled today. No other date for the meeting was announced.

According to sources here, the meeting was canceled because members of the Council could not reach an agreement on a draft resolution. The sources said the main obstacle was Lebanon's demand to include in the draft resolution issues other than the increases in the number of UNIFIL troops from the present 6,000 soldiers to 7,000. Sources at the UN said that beefing up the UN forces might help calm down the tense situation in south Lebanon which developed in the area recently. (By Yitzhak Rabi)

FOCUS ON ISSUES

PLO UNDERMINING CEASE-FIRE
ALONG ISRAEL-LEBANON BORDER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- The Israel Embassy issued a paper outlining how the Palestine Liberation Organization has sought to undermine the cessation of hostilities along the Israel-Lebanon border which went into effect July 24, 1981. The paper noted that Israel accepted the United States proposal for the cease-fire "in good faith and on the understanding that this would mean the cessation of PLO terrorism in southern Lebanon, in Israel, as well as against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad."

However, the Embassy paper continued, "the PLO has sought to undermine the situation. Indeed, since July 24, 1981, seven people have been killed and 49 injured in Israel; and furthermore, nine people have been killed and 150 wounded in 21 attacks against Israelis, Jews and others in Europe."

"Moreover, the PLO has deployed large quantities of recently delivered sophisticated Soviet weapons, which have enhanced its assault capability against Israel as well as against the Lebanese Christian community."

The Embassy paper cited a host of examples of PLO terrorist activities since July 24, 1981:

PLO Attacks In Israel

* On July 29, 1981, a bus was attacked by two terrorists on the approach road to Kibbutz Ma'ale Hahamisha near Jerusalem. Four passengers were wounded -- among them two teenagers and a woman in her seventh month of pregnancy (the woman survived, but she lost her baby).

* On August 8, an explosive device was thrown at three students near the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem.

* On August 23, a German tourist was shot in the head and killed near Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa.

* On September 12, an Italian pilgrim was murdered and 28 people wounded when a hand grenade was thrown at them in Jerusalem. Among the wounded were 22 Italian pilgrims, three Arabs, two Dutch tourists, a French and an American tourist.

* On November 17, PLO agents shot and killed a Ramallah village leader and his son.

PLO Attacks From Jordan

Since the cessation-of-hostilities, the PLO has increased its efforts to operate against Israel out of Jordan and have succeeded on more than one occasion.

* On the morning of August 11, 1981, two weeks following the cessation-of-hostilities, a mine planted by terrorist infiltrators from Jordan exploded on the Israeli side of the Jordan River, killing one Israeli soldier and wounding eight others.

* Three PLO terrorists were captured by Israeli troops on January 30. They, along with two or three others who escaped detection, had infiltrated into Israel by way of Jordan.

PLO Attacks Abroad

* On July 29, 1981, two PLO terrorists were arrested at the Vienna Airport while attempting to smuggle weapons into Austria.

* On August 9, an employee of El Al was wounded when a bomb exploded near, and

heavily damaged the airline's office at Rome Airport. Later that same day, two explosive charges were thrown at the Israel diplomatic mission in Athens.

* On August 10, two bombs exploded next to the Israel Embassy in Vienna. An elderly woman was slightly wounded.

* On August 29, PLO terrorists attacked a Vienna synagogue during Sabbath services. Two worshippers were killed, and 19 others injured.

* A Jewish restaurant in West Berlin was bombed on January 15. The "Eagles of the Palestine Revolution" claimed credit for this attack, in which a baby was killed and 25 people wounded.

PLO Attacks In Southern Lebanon

From July 24, 1981 until the end of the summer months alone, the PLO shelled and launched attacks on various villages in southern Lebanon no less than eighteen times. In addition, PLO terrorists have attacked UN peacekeeping troops in southern Lebanon on 63 different occasions, wounding five UN soldiers, the Embassy paper said.

PLO Rearmament And Regrouping In South Lebanon

The PLO is receiving large quantities of sophisticated Soviet-made weapons directly from the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc countries, as well as from Soviet client states in the region, such as Libya and Syria. Moreover, the PLO has received quantities of ammunition and light arms from Saudi Arabia, according to the paper.

Palestinian sources state that in the last three months, Soviet aid to the PLO, estimated at \$50 million, included ground-to-air missiles, ground-to-ground missiles, field artillery, and radar systems.

The PLO has taken delivery of large numbers of heavy artillery and rocket launchers, including at least 18 130mm cannon (with a range of over 17 miles), and BM-21 mobile multiple rocket launchers (which are capable of firing rapid salvos of up to 40 Katyusha rockets at targets over 13 miles). These weapons systems overlook all of northern Israel, the Embassy paper stated.

The PLO now possesses some 70 to 80 tanks, including heavy T-54 and T-55 models, in addition to the T-34 tanks previously in its arsenal. The PLO has acquired such new anti-aircraft weaponry as the SAM-9 missile and the 23mm ZSU-4 radar-guided, anti-aircraft cannon, as well as additional SAM-7 shoulder-launched missiles and an assortment of lighter anti-aircraft weapons.

At present there are approximately 5,000 PLO terrorists in southern Lebanon, many of whom are encamped within the UN peace-keeping zone. This figure, however, does not include the 1,500 terrorists in the city of Tyre, a center for communications installations and training bases, the Embassy reported.

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Israel's new Ambassador to the U.S., Moshe Arens, said Wednesday that his greatest sacrifice for Israel has been the requirement that he has to wear a "black tie" as part of his Ambassadorial duties. "Muriel (Mrs. Arens) and I have done many things for the State of Israel, but never this," he told 800 persons attending the International Biennial Convention of the B'nai B'rith Women here. "One of the reasons I made aliya from the U.S. was so that I wouldn't have to go around with a tie," he quipped.

JDC LEADERS SAY THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF POLISH GOVERNMENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST JEWS

NEW YORK, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- Representatives of the American Joint Distribution Committee, who left Warsaw yesterday after a four-day visit to determine the well-being of the Jewish community, said that the kosher food packages which had been shipped into Poland earlier this month had been received and distributed.

Henry Taub, JDC president, and Ralph Goldman, JDC executive vice president, met with representatives of the government and the Jewish community during the visit and said that they found no evidence of discrimination by the government against the Jewish community.

According to the JDC, there are an estimated 6,000 Jews remaining in Poland out of a pre-World War II population of more than three million. A total of 1,800 heads of families, mostly aged and infirm, survivors of the Holocaust are listed on the community's welfare rolls and are aided with the support of the JDC.

Walesa Accused Of Having Links With Zionists

Meanwhile, news reports from Poland said that Lech Walesa, leader of the suspended Solidarity trade union movement, has been accused by Polish authorities of having links with NATO and "Zionist groups," and of plotting an "anti-Communist crusade."

These accusations against Walesa may set the tone for today's first meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party since martial law was put into effect December 13. The attack on Walesa was carried in the officially controlled Polish press agency PAP, following a similar harsh attack in Poland's hard-line army newspaper, *Zolnierz Wolnosci*.

GROWING YAMIT POPULATION SEEN AS FORCE TO HALT SINAI WITHDRAWAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- Organizers of the "Halt the Sinai Withdrawal" campaign say that by the end of this month, two months before the final withdrawal date, the population of Yamit will have grown to between 7,000 and 8,000 or about three times the original maximum population of the settlement just on the Sinai side of the old international border.

They include the 400 original families who have so far refused to accept compensation offered them to resettle elsewhere in Israel. The movement says it is convinced that their very numbers will be enough to halt the withdrawal.

Special teams of movement technicians watch each day to see which houses are evacuated. They move in at night, change the locks and re-link the severed water and electricity connections, by-passing removed meters so that the new squatters do not have to pay for services.

The government, the Jewish Agency and the army have so far taken no steps to prevent the arrival of new squatters appearing every day.

POLISH CHRISTIAN WOMAN GIVEN YAD VASHEM 'MEDAL OF THE JUST'

GENEVA, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- A Polish Christian woman who saved the lives of Jews during World War II was presented with the Yad Vashem "Medal of the Just" by the Israeli Ambassador to Switzerland, Mattityahu Adler, in Bern.

Honored at a reception in the Ambassador's home was Irena Vicenz who, with her late husband,

Stanislav Vicenz, fled Poland and lived as refugees in Hungary during the war. When Hungary was occupied by the Nazis, they hid many Jews who otherwise would have been deported.

Ambassador Adler noted that had they been discovered by the Gestapo, the couple would have been shot. They settled in Lausanne after the war. Stanislav died in 1971. "This medal can only be a symbol of our gratitude," the envoy said. "Our gananim say whoever saves one human life saves a whole world."

NEWEST VOLUME OF THE YIDDISH LANGUAGE DICTIONARY PUBLISHED

NEW YORK, Feb. 24 (JTA) -- Volume IV of the Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language was published recently completing the letter Aleph, the first letter of the Yiddish alphabet. The newest volume contains 20,000 entries and is about one-third of the entire dictionary.

The first four volumes were published under the auspices of the Yiddish Dictionary Committee which was organized in the United States in the early 1950's. The dictionary project has historical roots going back to the early days of this century and to the great centers of Jewish learning and scholarship in Eastern Europe.

Publication of upcoming volumes has been handed over to a consortium of researchers and scholars from several major universities including Columbia University, the City College of New York and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and, on an administrative level, to the American Friends of the Hebrew University.

This arrangement was made public in a joint statement by Avraham Harman, president of the Hebrew University, and Isaiah Minkoff, chairman of the American Yiddish Dictionary Committee which, accordingly, has now been dissolved.

Many Persons Involved

Many persons have been deeply involved in the Dictionary. The late Yudel Mark edited much of the first four volumes, settling in Jerusalem and working at the Hebrew University. The Yivo Institute for Jewish Research is among the institutions which have been involved in the project.

The manuscript for Volume IV was ready for some time but its publication was made possible only last year when a grant from the estate of the late Harry Abramson, the Treasurer of the Yiddish Dictionary Committee, became available for its printing. The volume was dedicated to his memory.

According to Dr. Marvin Herzog, Atran Professor of Yiddish Studies at Columbia University and the other co-principal investigator, "Further research and the preparation for publication of the rest of the Dictionary will require about two years a volume to complete, including glosses in English and in Hebrew which will enable individuals for whom Yiddish is not their mother tongue to use the Dictionary." Herzog is the editor-in-chief of the Dictionary.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- A Knesset majority Wednesday rejected an attempt by Finance Minister Yoram Aridor to submit his 475 billion Shekel budget to the Finance Committee before it passes the required first reading in the Knesset plenum. The budget was approved by the Cabinet last Sunday and is supposed to go into effect on April 1, the start of the new fiscal year. The opposition achieved only a technical victory with little bearing on the fate of the budget which is expected to win Knesset approval.