

JTA daily news bulletin

Contents copyright: Republication only by previous arrangement.

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

Vol. LXI - 66th Year

Thursday, May 12, 1983

No. 91

KNESSET BEGINS DEBATE ON ISRAEL-LEBANON PACT; SHAMIR SAYS IT PAVES THE WAY TO 'PEACE AND COEXISTENCE'

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) — The Knesset opened debate today on the Israel-Lebanon agreement. Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir hailed it as a success and the best arrangement that could be made under the circumstances, paving the "way to peace and coexistence."

Shimon Peres, chairman of the opposition Labor Party, accused the Likud government of mishandling the war in Lebanon and charged that Israel was less secure and in a worse political position now than when the war began more than 11 months ago.

The government is seeking Knesset approval of a statement on the agreement with Lebanon which it hopes can be signed by next week. Israel, which accepted the agreement in principle by a vote of 18-2 in the Cabinet last Friday, is seeking clarification of certain key points from the U.S.

The Lebanese Parliament has yet to ratify the accord. Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization have denounced it. The agreement, even if signed, would not become operative unless the Syrians and PLO agreed to pull their forces out of Lebanon.

Seeking Wide Parliamentary Support

Although Knesset approval is not required by law, the government is seeking the widest possible parliamentary backing for the accord which has become sharply controversial among Israelis on both the left and right wings of the political spectrum. The government, therefore, initiated a statement of approval to forestall a critical statement by the opposition. The vote is expected next Monday, after conclusion of the debate.

Today's Knesset session was a short one because of celebrations marking the 16th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. Shamir and Peres were the only speakers and their remarks were largely for the record. By the time the debate adjourned, only six MKs remained in the chamber. But Shamir's defense of the agreement and Peres' scathing criticism defined the points of view which are dividing Israelis on the issue.

'There Is No Real Alternative'

Shamir acknowledged that the accord, worked out by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz in two weeks of shuttle diplomacy between Jerusalem and Beirut, is "not yet a full peace but still an end to the state of war." He was referring apparently to the provision ending the state of belligerency between the two countries.

"Accept the agreement," Shamir declared. "There is no real alternative. The alternative of a long Israeli occupation of south Lebanon is impossible and the Lebanese army itself is too weak to prevent the return of chaos to the security zone. Hence, the concept of the security arrangements agreed to, based on the demilitarization of the security zone to ensure that the PLO will not return there and the establishment of joint patrols with the Lebanese army in cooperation with Maj. Saad Haddad's forces."

Shamir appealed to the Lebanese government not to be deterred from signing the agreement. Discussions are still going on regarding the clarifications requested by Israel "but signing the agreement will ensure the way to peace and coexistence," the Foreign Minister said. He assured Syria that the agreement is not aimed against any country. "The extremist statements from Damascus of late are baseless," he said.

Shamir warned that if the PLO and Syrians do not withdraw from Lebanon, "Israel will be free to act in its own interests." He said Israel's withdrawal to the international boundary was conditional on the withdrawal of all foreign forces, the return of all Israeli prisoners of war and the return of the bodies of Israeli soldiers killed in action.

Peres Says There Is No Victory

Peres responded by noting that what had originally been intended as a three-day operation (the "Peace for Galilee" campaign) had become a 365-day war with very heavy casualties and no end in sight. He said Israeli soldiers are now spread out all over Lebanon, exposed to terrorist attacks.

"There is a war of attrition along lines our soldiers are not used to and the Russians are back in the area," Peres said. "The Syrians have suddenly found themselves with veto powers and the PLO is moving back into Lebanon."

According to Peres, the "end of the state of war" with Lebanon cannot be hailed as a victory because Lebanon has not really been in a state of war with Israel for 35 years, since the armistice agreements of 1949, beyond which the present agreement does not really advance.

Peres contended that present security arrangements are worse than before the war and during the fighting more Israelis died than in all the terrorist attacks from Lebanon in three decades. He said the government not only mishandled the war but made a mess of the negotiations which dragged on for seven months.

Peres proposed that Israel give Syria a deadline to respond to the agreement. He suggested June 5, the first anniversary of the start of the war in Lebanon. If they do not comply, Israel should withdraw unilaterally to the 28-mile security zone which would be easy to defend and fight a war of attrition. He said Haddad and an international force could then step in and enable Israel to bring its forces home.

Clarifications Under Discussion

Meanwhile, Israeli and American diplomats are discussing the clarifications Israel wants before signing the agreement. U.S. special envoy Philip Habib returned from Beirut last night and was scheduled to meet with Shamir today. Afterwards, the American and Israeli negotiating teams will hold a joint session.

The Lebanese Parliament has postponed a scheduled vote on the agreement while Israel seeks clarifications from the U.S., the Phalangist radio in Beirut reported today. The radio said Lebanese parliamentary leaders would discuss the agreement only in its final form. Israeli sources have been cautious in their comments about these developments for fear of further complicating the already explosive situation in Lebanon.

Israel and the U.S. apparently have agreed that the parties must reach a final understanding as quickly as possible so that the agreement can be signed next week. Once it is signed, Israel will leave it to the Americans to overcome the most serious obstacle — convincing Syria to go along.

SOLOON ACCUSES STATE DEPT. OF KEEPING MUM ON PLO FIGHTERS REMAINING IN BEIRUT FOLLOWING THE ACCORD TO EVACUATE ALL TERRORISTS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) — Sen. Carl Levin (D. Mich.) has accused the State Department of failing to make public that it knew some 300-600 Palestine Liberation Organization "fighters" had remained in west Beirut last September following the agreement for the evacuation of all PLO terrorists.

"I believe the way the State Department has conducted itself in this matter is further evidence of a tilt by the Administration away from Israel," Levin said in entering into the Congressional Record yesterday a series of letters between him and Lawrence Eagleburger, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs.

Levin said that after he and other Senators were told about the PLO terrorists, Eagleburger promised to make the information public. He said he was entering the letters, which date from September 24 to March 22, to "set the historical record straight with regard to what the State Department knew about the PLO presence in west Beirut when Israel moved in, and how it distorted public perception at the time and since then by its refusal to make the information known." Israeli troops moved into west Beirut September 15 following the assassination of Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel.

Letters To Eagleburger

In a letter to Eagleburger September 24, Levin noted that on September 17 Eagleburger assured Senators at a briefing that "if the State Department had not that day already stated that the PLO kept 300-600 armed personnel in Beirut" in violation of the agreement worked out by special envoy Philip Habib, "the State Department would do so promptly."

Levin wrote another letter on January 11 again asking that the information be made public. He received a reply February 4 from Powell Moore, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, which talked about PLO "combatants" having "infiltrated into Lebanon."

After another letter to Eagleburger March 1, Levin received a reply from Eagleburger March 22 in which the State Department official said "last September 17, I informed you and your colleagues that according to U.S. intelligence estimates, 300-600 armed PLO fighters remained in Beirut in violation of the agreement negotiated by Ambassador Habib."

Eagleburger said that he told the Senators that the State Department spokesman would make the information public if the press asked about it but the question was never raised. "The Department was remiss in not taking direct steps to make our assessment public immediately following my testimony," Eagleburger admitted. But he added that because of the "fast breaking developments in Beirut," this issue "was soon eclipsed by other developments."

Levin said he finds "rather disturbing" Eagleburger's explanation that the reporters did not ask about the issue "when the media hadn't even known about it."

THOUSANDS MARK 16th ANNIVERSARY OF THE REUNIFICATION OF JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) — Residents of Jerusalem, joined by thousands of Israelis from all over the country and tourists from abroad, today marked the 16th anniversary of the reunification of the city. The city was bedecked with flags, amid a festive atmosphere mixed with memorial services and observances in memory of those who fell in the liberation of the city in 1967.

President Chaim Herzog, in one of his first appearances since becoming the head of state, expressed the hope that the unification of the city would herald and symbolize the unity of the Jewish people inside Israel and throughout the world.

The central memorial service in the city was held at Ammunition Hill, scene of some of the fiercest fighting in 1967 which led to the taking of the entire eastern quarters of the city and the Old City itself within the ancient walls.

In the Gush Etzion bloc of four Jewish villages overrun by the Arab Legion 35 years ago, a memorial was dedicated to the 240 Jewish soldiers and civilians killed when the group of villages was captured. A small group of members of the Faithful of the Temple Mount held a licensed prayer meeting near the gate leading to the Temple Mount area. There were no incidents.

ISRAEL'S NEW ENVOY TO THE U.S. IS SLATED TO ARRIVE SUNDAY

PARIS, May 11 (JTA) — Israel's newly appointed Ambassador to the United States Meir Rosenne, is scheduled to arrive in Washington on Sunday from Paris where he has spent close to three years as Israel's representative. Rosenne today took his leave from President Francois Mitterrand after having met members of the Cabinet at a luncheon given in his honor at the Quai D'Orsay.

Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson paid tribute to Rosenne's "devotion and outspoken defense of his country's interests and policy." Rosenne was also feted by the Gaullist opposition leader and Paris Mayor, Jacques Chirac.

JEWISH AGENCY REPORTS INCREASE IN NUMBER OF OLIM TO ISRAEL

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) — The Jewish Agency reported yesterday that 1,175 immigrants arrived in Israel last month, a 45.2 percent increase over April, 1982 when only 809 arrived. Immigration figures for the first four months of this year totalled 4,538, a 21.4 percent increase over the same period last year.

Rafael Kotlowitz, head of the Agency's immigration and absorption department, stressed the "significant increase" from Western countries. The arrivals in April included 873 from the West compared to 584 last year.

Immigrants from Latin America numbered 309, the largest single group from the West. The U.S. provided 209 new immigrants compared to 75 a year earlier and 108 were from France which had provided only 56 immigrants a year ago.

But Kotlowitz noted that since the beginning of the year, only 107 of the 421 Jews permitted to leave the Soviet Union came to Israel. Last month there were only nine from the USSR, on all time monthly low.

By contrast, Latin America is becoming the largest source of new immigrants. There were 1,082 arrivals in

the first four months of this year compared to 641 in the same period last year, a rise of 69 percent.

Controversy Over Aliya Potential From Asia

Meanwhile, a controversy has emerged in the Jewish Agency Executive over the claim by two of its members, Eli Artzi and Asher Ohaion, that a vast aliya potential exists in Asia.

Artzi, who is Director General of the Absorption Ministry, and Ohaion, who holds the same post in the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, contend that about 20 million people in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India observe Jewish customs, and their absorption into Israel could be one of the greatest projects since the State was founded.

The two officials made that proposal in a letter to Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization Executives. But Agency officials are skeptical. They stated flatly that these people are not Jews. Scholars specializing in Asian ethnology said yesterday that many studies have proven that there is absolutely no basis for the claim that the people in question are Jews.

But Artzi and Ohaion, as members of the Jewish Agency Executive, may insist that their proposal be raised at future meetings.

SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES INCREASE AID TO ISRAEL

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- The Reagan Administration appears not to be concerned about the increase in its recommended military and economic assistance to Israel voted by Senate and House committees. But there were indications today that the Administration hopes that the increases can be blocked before final Congressional approval is taken.

This reaction emerged today after the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 18-5 yesterday to increase the economic assistance to Israel for the 1984 fiscal year from the \$750 million recommended by the Administration to \$850 million, all of it a grant.

The committee also provided that the \$1.7 billion in military assistance for Israel be split evenly between loans and grants, at \$850 million each. The Administration had recommended that only \$550 million of the military assistance be a grant.

The Senate Foreign Affairs Committee voted the same split between grants and loans in the military assistance last week but it approved \$910 million in economic assistance to Israel, of which \$850 million would be a grant.

As occurred at the Senate hearings, a State Department representative present at the House committee meeting yesterday supported the Administration's proposals but did not oppose the increases.

However, at the State Department today, deputy spokesman Alan Romberg said "we have continued to support our proposal, pointing out that we believe it is sufficient to meet Israel's security requirements." He said that "increases for Israel in the confines of budget ceilings run the risk of crowding out assistance to other countries of strategic importance to the United States."

Romberg added that the House committee's action is "one step" in the Congressional process. "The budget committees, appropriations committees and authorization committees have yet to complete action," he noted.

ENTIRE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN TOKYO JOINS B'NAI B'RITH

TOKYO, May 11 (JTA) -- For the first time in B'nai B'rith International's 139-year history, an entire Jewish community has decided to affiliate with BBI.

As a result of the efforts of B'nai B'rith International vice president Steve Rudman and honorary president Jack Spitzer, the Jewish community of Tokyo -- some 90 families -- has joined the world's largest and oldest Jewish service organization.

The new group will be called "The Jewish Community of Japan," the name of the Tokyo Jewish community center that houses a synagogue, Judaica library, kosher kitchen and mikvah. "The officers of the community will also be the officers of the B'nai B'rith group," said Seymour Reich, BBI membership chairman. "This will help ensure the continuity of their relationship with B'nai B'rith."

The mass affiliation has its roots in a trip to Japan that Rudman made some two years ago. Then B'nai B'rith membership chairman, Rudman enrolled several members-at-large, including Leslie Blau, who soon became president of the Jewish community. Rudman reported that the Jewish community center was "a beehive of activity." Last December, Spitzer visited Tokyo and with the assistance of Blau, "signed up" the remainder of the community.

ISAIAH MINKOFF DEAD AT 82

NEW YORK, May 11 (JTA) -- Isaiah Minkoff, a long-time leader in Jewish labor and liberal causes, died of cancer after a brief hospitalization at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center here last night. A funeral service will be held Friday at Park West Chapel.

Minkoff, who was 82 years old, served for 31 years as executive director, later executive vice president, of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC). He directed it from its founding in 1944 until his retirement in 1975. Prior to his work at NJCRAC, Minkoff served as executive director of NJCRAC's precursor, The General Jewish Council, from 1941 to 1944. Before that, from 1936 to 1941, during the heyday of the Jewish labor movement, he was executive director of the Jewish Labor Committee.

Minkoff began organizing Jewish labor union support, and support of the general American labor movement, on the issue of combatting Nazism, through a "counter-olympics" held at Randall's Island in 1936, in protest to the holding of the regular games in Nazi Berlin during that year. This activity led to leadership in a labor-backed effort to boycott Nazi goods imported into the United States.

Before American entry in World War II, Minkoff was active in gaining American asylum for European labor and socialist leaders who were threatened by Hitler's advance in the war's early years. He served as unofficial liaison with the State Department in securing visas, passports and means of escape.

Born in Warsaw in 1901, Minkoff became involved in Jewish and socialist organizations as a teenager through war refugee relief work, in Moscow, during World War I. After the Russian revolutions of February and November 1917, he continued as a student activist in the Russian Jewish Social-Democratic movement, which eventually led to a one-year term in Soviet prisons. After fleeing the Soviet Union in 1922, Minkoff attended the University of California at Berkeley, earning a B.A. in Slavonic Languages in 1926. After his retirement from NJCRAC in 1975, Minkoff remained an active lay leader in many Jewish organizations.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES PROTESTS IN AUSTRIA AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY THAT A FORMER NAZI MIGHT GET A HIGH GOVERNMENT POST By Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, May 11 (JTA) -- Protests are rising in Austria about the possibility that Friedrich Peter, faction leader of the smallest parliamentary party, the Freedom Party (FPOE), might become the Third President of the Parliament.

Peter was a member of the notorious First SS Infantry Brigade, and this has become a source of sharp controversy with, among others, Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal. Although no specific charges have been brought against Peter, many Austrians feel that his past membership in a brigade notorious for mass murder is not compatible with one of the highest offices of the Austrian Republic.

There were protests this week from Jewish communities, the Socialist Youth Organization, and from a group of journalists, artists and intellectuals.

Background Of The Development

The background of this development is the attempt to establish a coalition government comprising the Socialists and the Freedom Party. A coalition government became necessary after Chancellor Bruno Kreisky's Socialist Party lost the absolute majority it had held for 12 years in the Parliament. In the elections on April 24, the Socialists won 90 seats, two short of an absolute majority.

Grave differences over economic policy made it impossible for the Socialists to form a coalition with the second largest party, the Conservative People's Party. The Socialists, moreover, will have to yield less power and posts to a coalition partner with only 12 seats than to one holding 81.

The coalition talks have been going smoothly and might conclude in a few days. The Freedom Party will probably get the office of Vice Chancellor and three Cabinet ministers. Norbert Steger, the party leader and representative of its liberal wing, is expected to become Vice Chancellor under Socialist Chancellor Fred Sinowatz.

The coalition deal will probably give Peter, former chairman of the Freedom Party, the office of Third President of the Parliament. Until now, the First and Third Presidents were members of the majority party, while the second President was a member of the largest opposition party. Peter has served as the factional leader of his party in the Parliament.

Although many Socialists are not happy to see Peter elevated to one of the highest offices in the country, it is fairly certain that party discipline will prevail in the decisive vote May 19 when the new Parliament holds its first session.

Kreisky Is Indebted To Peter

Kreisky, who governed Austria for 13 years and who is now retired, is indebted to Peter and has on several occasions intervened on his behalf. In 1970, Kreisky's Socialist Party gained a relative majority, pushing the governing Conservative People's Party to the opposition benches.

He survived a year of a minority government only with the help of Peter's Freedom Party, which, in turn, gained status as a result of a new electoral law favoring small parties. The law secured the Freedom Party's permanent representation in the Parliament.

In 1971, Kreisky won an absolute majority and no longer needed the Freedom Party. But he still considered the possibility of a future coalition with the small party as a means of avoiding collaboration with the conservatives. That time has now arrived and Peter wants his share. But the public, or at least part of the public in a country that still accommodates a fairly large group of anti-Semites, does not think that he should get it.

On Monday, a group of intellectuals, artists and journalists ran a two-page advertisement in the news-magazine Profil and signed a letter of protest addressed to the President demanding that he refuse Peter a ministerial post. They also urged the political parties not to elect him Third President of the Parliament.

Wiesenthal Uncovered Peter's Past

Peter's past was uncovered in 1975 when Wiesenthal said in a television interview that Peter had been a member of the First SS Infantry Brigade which killed some 8,000 Jewish men, women and children in the Soviet Union. Wiesenthal, however, said then that Peter's personal role in this slaughter was not known.

Peter rejected Wiesenthal's accusations and said that he had "just done his duty as a soldier." He argued that he served at the front but never participated in any "cleaning actions," the euphemism at the time for mass murder. However, according to orders given by SS leader Heinrich Himmler, the First Brigade was not intended to fight at the front but for "cleaning actions" in the hinterland.

Peter was not the only one who took issue with Wiesenthal. He received the support of Kreisky who called Wiesenthal's accusations outrageous and rejected the charges as party propaganda. Wiesenthal was known to be a conservative.

Meanwhile, Peter has sued Wiesenthal. The trial was scheduled to begin May 17, two days before the first session of the Parliament. It has been postponed until next fall. Peter recently dissociated himself from his Nazi past, according to some prominent Socialist politicians. But he has done so only privately, among friends and colleagues, not publicly.

REFUSENIK MIGHT BE TRIED FOR 'DRAFT EVASION'

NEW YORK, May 11 (JTA) -- Mikhail Rosenshtein, the 21-year-old son of Moscow refusenik Grigory Rosenshtein, is likely to be tried in June for "draft evasion," according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Mikhail, a recent paramedical graduate, applied for permission to emigrate to Israel in 1978, after his father's application for the family was rejected four years earlier because of alleged access to "state secrets." Promised an exit permit in June, 1977, Mikhail never received one. There is speculation that the charge of draft evasion is being used to place Mikhail and other refuseniks in a "Catch 22" situation; many, including Mikhail, seek exemption from military service because it is used as a means to further delay permission to leave on the basis of state security.

The Rosenshteins are one of a growing number of Jewish families trying to raise their children in a traditional, religious manner. Grigory teaches them history and customs, while his wife, Natalia, instructs them in Hebrew. They have held seminars on Jewish religion and culture in their home, and celebrate the Jewish holidays. The youngest son, Efraim, became Bar Mitzvah in a private ceremony in September 1982.