

# RESIGNATION OF SHAS PARTY LEADER THREATENS THE UNITY GOVERNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- The Labor-Likud government was threatened by its first serious internal crisis today when Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, leader of the Sephardic religious party Shas, submitted his resignation in a bitter dispute over Cabinet portfolios with the National Religious Party.

Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, head of Likud, cut short his Latin American trip and was reported to be flying home from Venezuela to try to resolve the dispute before Peretz's resignation takes effect. A Cabinet member's resignation becomes official 48 hours after it is formally submitted.

## Problem Of A Delicate Balance

The problem is not that Shas, a new faction with four Knesset members, could bring down the unity government by going into opposition. It is rather, that the departure of Shas would disturb the delicate balance between the two major components of the coalition, each of which acts as patron to several smaller Knesset factions. Likud is the patron of Shas. Labor has been backing the NRP in the dispute.

Deputy Premier David Levy, a powerful voice in Likud, warned today that the secession of Shas inevitably would "harm and endanger" the coalition because it would call into question Likud's credibility as Shas' partner and patron. Levy did not threaten a Likud walk-out but some observers saw such threat implicit in his remarks.

## Effort To Resolve Portfolio Dispute

Two coalition ministers, Haim Corfu of Likud and Moshe Shahal of Labor, have been negotiating for weeks to resolve the portfolio dispute. As of last week, Peretz had apparently agreed to accept the Interior Ministry -- a traditional fiefdom of the NRP -- while the latter, reduced from six to four Knesset mandates in last July's elections, would take over the Religious Affairs Ministry.

But the NRP insisted, with Labor's support, that religious functions falling within the purview of the Interior Ministry be transferred to the Religious Affairs Ministry. Peretz, who is said to have agreed to the arrangement, balked over the weekend and was advised by the Shas "Council of Sages" to quit the Cabinet.

Labor maintains that Likud could resolve the matter by naming a Shas member Deputy Minister of Housing, a sub-Cabinet post sought by the party. Levy, who is Housing Minister as well as Deputy Premier, said last week that Likud was prepared to make the appointment. He claimed that the Labor-NRP accord to whittle down the Interior Ministry was responsible for the crisis.

But the appointment of a Shas deputy minister would aggravate the long simmering tension between the Herut and Liberal Party wings of Likud. The Liberals are expected to demand additional appointments for themselves.

The danger of a broader coalition crisis stems in part from Peretz's remarks to reporters last week hint-

ing that if his party quits the unity coalition it would be free in the future to join a narrowly-based Labor-led government, something it refused to do during the coalition negotiations that followed the July elections.

Shahal, who is Energy Minister, predicted today that the crisis would be resolved without escalating into a battle between Labor and Likud, even if Shas quits the government.

Corfu, obviously bitter and frustrated over the breakdown of the agreement he and Shahal negotiated between Shas and the NRP, accused Peretz, a Minister-Without-Portfolio of reneging. Peretz, he said, suddenly threw in a demand for the deputy ministership of housing because of pressure from his Shas colleague who is slated to get the post.

## RABIN BELIEVES ACCOMMODATION WITH SYRIA IS ESSENTIAL TO AN ISRAELI ACCORD WITH LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin believes that an accommodation with Syria is essential to an agreement with Lebanon that would permit the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from Lebanese soil and ensure the security of Israel's northern borders.

According to Rabin, Syria holds the key to the deadlocked Israel-Lebanon military talks, now in their third week at Nakura, under the auspices of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Furthermore, the Israeli defense chief told journalists at a Foreign Press Association luncheon here Friday, an expanded role for UNIFIL in south Lebanon after the IDF withdraws is the paramount consideration, superseding the dispute between Israel and Lebanon over the role to be played by the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA).

Rabin told the overseas journalists that the priorities facing Israel's Labor-Likud unity government, in order of urgency are: the country's economic crisis; withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon; thawing the "cold peace" with Egypt; and extending the peace process with Egypt to Israel's other Arab neighbors.

## Essential To Bring Syria Into Political Talks

On the matter of Lebanon, Rabin drew a distinction between the military talks at Nakura and the overlying political issues. It is essential to bring Syria into the political negotiations, he said, "for the simple reason that Syria has come out of the Lebanon war as the most dominant factor on its (the Lebanese) government. That might be an unpleasant fact, but it is a fact," Rabin said.

"We would like to see the Syrian army out of Lebanon but we have made it clear we have not made Syrian withdrawal a condition," the Defense Minister said. "If Syria would like to continue to be bogged down in the Lebanese mud, let them enjoy it." Rabin added that while Israel would like to have normal, peaceful relations with Lebanon, that, too, has not been made a condition for its withdrawal.

He noted that Israel insists on security arrangements that will protect its northern borders. This does not mean a guarantee that no Katyusha rockets would ever

fall on Israeli soil. What Israel wants, he said, is to avoid a situation whereby Palestine Liberation Organization forces control territory north of the border from where they could fire at will on Israel, as was the case before the Lebanon war in 1982.

Rabin also observed that "What we face in Lebanon today is more a Moslem Shiite war than a war between the PLO and Israel. And I would like to avoid that."

What Israel is seeking now, Rabin said, was a political agreement negotiated indirectly with Lebanon and Syria through the good offices of the United States. The Reagan Administration's top Middle East aide, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, has been in the region for the past week and is shuttling between Jerusalem, Beirut and Damascus.

Rabin's stress on UNIFIL's peace-keeping role is a sharp departure from the position of the previous Likud-led government. Israel wants UNIFIL to police the area of south Lebanon up to the Awali River, the line now held by the IDF. If that can be worked out, the dispute over the SLA in the immediate border region will fall in place, the Defense Minister said.

#### Sees No Rapid Thaw In Relations With Egypt

Rabin did not expect a rapid thaw in relations with Egypt which, he said, is presently intent on repairing its bridges to the rest of the Arab world. But he noted that the Egyptians seem ready to resume negotiations on their border dispute with Israel over Taba, a sliver of land on the Gulf of Aqaba which both countries claim. "I have never heard of an area the size of 1,200 meters by 600 meters creating a problem anywhere," Rabin said.

(Reports from Cairo over the weekend, via U.S. sources, said the Egyptians have agreed to resume the Taba negotiations at Beersheba, and possibly alternately in Alexandria.)

Rabin noted that Israel is willing to meet another Egyptian condition for improved relations, namely progress on the Palestinian issue. Israel seeks to improve the quality of life for the Palestinians on the West Bank, Rabin said.

He explained in reply to questions that since the Arab mayors and leaders in the territory have placed their fate in the hands of the PLO or King Hussein of Jordan, "We cannot talk to them about any political solution in the area. We can only talk to them about daily matters."

Rabin said he had told Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem that if Saudi Arabia or any other Arab country offered him a million dollars, he could accept it and use it for local purposes, building schools or playgrounds or hospitals but "not for political or terrorist purposes."

#### Rejects Local West Bank Elections

Rabin rejected local elections in West Bank towns. The last, held in 1976 when he was Prime Minister, brought Arab nationalists and radicals into office, most of them subsequently deposed by the Likud government.

He noted that local elections were never held in any of the 22 Arab nations and "We have no intention of being the torch-bearer of democracy throughout the Arab world when they themselves do not practice such democratic procedures."

#### TEL AVIV MUNICIPAL WORKERS END THEIR 11-DAY STRIKE By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- The 11-day strike of Tel Aviv municipal workers ended last night, after weekend negotiations resulted in the agreement of the commercial banks to lend the City Council an additional two billion shekels (some \$3.3 million).

Sanitation workers agreed to begin work during the night to collect the nearly 80,000 tons of garbage which had mounted up in the streets, when they were promised that their salaries would be paid into their bank accounts first thing this morning. The city workers had gone on strike to protest non-payment of their November salaries, usually paid on the 5th of each month.

Mayor Shlomo Lahat has accused the Finance and Interior Ministries of failure to appreciate the problems of the country's metropolis which he says has financial problems unlike those of any other city. He noted recently that while the government could afford to exceed its budget, "we do not have the facility to print money when we run short."

The government asked the banks to extend the city further loans while awaiting details from Lahat how he plans to cut expenditures. He has been accused of carrying out lavish development and beautification plans while having insufficient money to pay his employees.

#### C.O.L. INDEX UP 19.5% IN NOVEMBER

TEL AVIV, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- The cost of living index rose by 19.5 percent during November, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced Friday. It was the first C.O.L. index published since the start of the three-month economic package deal freezing prices and wages, but it also covered price increases in the two weeks before the freeze agreement started.

The index announcement was greeted with mixed feelings, although there was general satisfaction that it was below 20 percent.

While some economists and business leaders saw it as heralding a successful outcome of the efforts to halt runaway inflation, others said the comparatively high figure indicated that manufacturers and merchants had artificially raised their prices in the days before the price freeze halted such possibilities.

#### 'GRAVE CONCERN' EXPRESSED OVER THREE SOVIET JEWISH ACTIVISTS CURRENTLY AWAITING TRIAL

NEW YORK, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- The National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) has expressed "grave concern" over the conditions of three Soviet Jewish activists and Hebrew teachers currently awaiting trial, Aleksandr Kholmiansky, Yuli Edelstein and Yakov Mesh.

Kholmiansky, arrested in July for allegedly "possessing weapons and ammunition," is currently in the third month of a hunger strike begun to protest the beatings he received when he arrived in prison.

Although a medical commission which recently examined Kholmiansky at the request of Soviet authorities determined his condition was "not life threatening," medical experts have noted in the past that such a lengthy fast can produce irreversible physical damage.

While variables such as the individual's weight and general health must be considered, nutrition experts at Cornell University Medical School estimate that a hunger strike can sustain life for 30-35 days if water is ingested.

#### Danger Of Force-Feeding

Although authorities are now "force-feeding" Khloimiansky, former Prisoner of Conscience Iosif Mendelevich, who himself carried on a 54-day hunger strike during his lengthy imprisonment, noted this procedure can be "more painful than a continuous hunger strike." Mendelevich, who emigrated to Israel in 1980, recalled the "fiercely sophisticated form of torture," the NCSJ reported.

"Guards enter the cell, attack the prisoner... they force open his mouth with a special instrument," Mendelevich said. "An 0.8 centimeter tube is placed in the prisoner's mouth with direct access to the stomach; 1,000 calories of liquid food is poured through the tube. If the hunger striker stops the flow --- then the tube is shoved up his nose."

Aside from the brutal physical treatment, Mendelevich stated that "this type of feeding harms the body's metabolism and causes painful headaches and stomach aches. As it is given between long breaks, it forces the prisoner to start the hunger strike over and over again."

#### The Plight Of Edelstein

Edelstein, detained on charges of "drug possession" since September, has recently completed seven days in solitary confinement, according to the NCSJ. He is also on a hunger strike following the confiscation of religious articles he had with him in the prison. Although the investigation of Edelstein's case is now complete and he is expected to be tried shortly, the lawyer retained by Edelstein's wife, Tanya, now claims that he was "made dirty" by the case, and that he is "unable" to defend him.

#### Mesh Is 'Dangerously Ill'

Finally, Mesh is reported as "dangerously ill" by the NCSJ as a result of a beating he received upon arrival at the prison. After sustaining injuries to the lower abdomen and liver, he is diagnosed as suffering from hepatitis. No trial date has been set for Mesh, who is charged with allegedly "resisting arrest" and "refusing to give testimony."

#### FIRST VATICAN OFFICIAL EVER IS RECIPIENT OF CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATION'S GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD

BOSTON, Dec. 16 (JTA) -- Msgr. Jorge Mejia, Secretary of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, was in Chestnut Hill, Mass. earlier this month to receive the annual Good Neighbor Award of Mishkan Tefila, a Conservative congregation whose Brotherhood established the award 25 years ago.

Mejia is the first Vatican official to be a recipient. The decision to honor him followed a visit to Rome last June by Rabbi Richard Yellin, spiritual leader of Mishkan Tefila, which included a meeting with Pope John Paul II. Yellin had first met Mejia a year earlier when both attended an international interfaith meeting in Boston.

The presentation was made in the presence of Boston's Archbishop Bernard Law at the annual Good Neighbor Dinner December 4, sponsored by the Mish-

kan Tefila Brotherhood and chaired by Benjamin Lipson. The guests included Rabbi Henry Michelman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, the rabbinical branch of Conservative Judaism in the U.S.

#### Significance Of The Award

Mejia, in accepting the tribute, underscored its significance when he noted that Vatican officials are seldom allowed to accept such honors. He read a letter from Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Commission for relations with the Jews, saying that the award shows that "something is deeply changed in the ... relations between Jews and the Catholic Church."

Mejia added to the members of Mishkan Tefila, "you have taught us how to behave toward one we want to consider a neighbor." That observation was strongly seconded by Archbishop Law who said he had been "pained" by the recollections of anti-Semitism in Boston "because I assumed that some of the pain was caused by some who shared the faith and perspective that is mine."

Yellin said, in his remarks on the occasion, "The dialogues between Catholics and Jews on a variety of levels, have created estimable alliances of outreach that has united us and given us a common agenda. This is the ancient Biblical metaphor, never being alone in the face of a threat, but encouraged to develop freely, independently, unabated, contributing to the common good."

Yellin made available to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency a letter he received from Cardinal Willebrands several weeks before the presentation, expressing "great pleasure" at Congregation Mishkan Tefila's decision to honor Mejia.

#### Letter From Cardinal Willebrands

"I see in this gesture of yourself and your congregation an expression of acknowledgement and gratitude for whatever the receiver of the Award has been able to do for your Congregation during your visit to Rome last June, and for Jewish-Catholic relations in general in the seven years that he has already been serving in his present appointment," the Cardinal wrote.

The letter added: "I believe your gesture has a deeper significance. It is in fact not that frequent that Jewish Congregations anywhere grant awards to Catholic priests, let alone Vatican officers. Therefore, I cannot but feel that what you intend to do on December 4 goes well beyond the actual fact and person, or persons involved."

"It would mean that a Jewish community as a whole, your Congregation in the present case, finds it appropriate to acknowledge publicly that something has deeply changed in the field of relations between Judaism and Catholic Church and that this is worthy not only of academic or technical appreciation, but also of symbolic affirmation, in an intensely human communitarian context."

Past recipients of Mishkan Tefila's Good Neighbor Award include John Cardinal Wright and Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston; the then Sen. John Kennedy and all Governors of Massachusetts; and the present Speaker of the House, Rep. Thomas O'Neil.

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## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### A DISTURBING RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE GREEN PARTY AND THE NAZI PARTY

By David Kantor

BONN, Dec. 16 (JTA) — Frequent allegations of a resemblance between the Green Party, which has won 10 percent of the popular vote in recent national and regional elections, and the rise of the Nazi Party in the Weimar Republic more than a half century ago, has irritated leftwing Jewish intellectuals who share the ecological and pacifist philosophy of the Greens.

Nevertheless, the parallels are disturbing to many Germans, Jews and non-Jews, because the Greens manifest certain nationalistic tendencies and are distinctly unfriendly toward Israel.

Until recently, comparisons were drawn by political opponents of the Green Party, notably the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian counterpart, the Christian Social Union (CSU), both conservative. But at the Green Party's last convention, the Nazi analogy was expressed from within its ranks.

It came from Rudolf Bahro, an ideological father figure of the Greens who complained that the party's rise in recent years was similar to that of the Nazis. His remarks triggered shouts of protest and Bahro undoubtedly forfeited much of the high regard he enjoyed among the Greens. But clearly, his outspoken criticism set a precedent which cannot be ignored.

There have since been other voices raised in the party for a frank discussion of its ideologically nationalistic tendencies and of its organizational structures which bear an unpleasant kinship to those of the Nazis.

#### Evidence Of Hostility Toward Jews

The first evidence of a hostile attitude toward Jews emerged in 1981 when some branches of the party circulated a calendar containing anti-Semitic propaganda. When the Jewish Telegraphic Agency questioned this at the time, party officials initially tried to brush it aside.

But when evidence of the anti-Semitic nature of the calendar was produced, the same officials repudiated the behavior of the branches concerned. They maintained they could not be held responsible for every incident that occurred in the party which was then new and growing at a rapid pace.

During the war in Lebanon in 1982, the Greens issued a strong anti-Jewish statement. They urged the Bonn government to withdraw reparations money from Jewish Holocaust victims and make it available instead to the Palestinian and Lebanese victims of what they called a Jewish-made "holocaust."

#### Several Top Officials Had Nazi Records

After their election to the Bundestag for the first time in March, 1983, the Greens admitted that several top party officials, including a member of the Bundestag, had Nazi records. Two of the officials were dismissed but the others retained their positions in the party.

In the summer of 1984, a delegation of the Green Party visited Israel to express support for the Progressive List For Peace, a coalition of Jewish leftists and Israeli Arab nationalists standing for election to the Knesset on a platform which called for the creation of a Palestinian state.

When the German-Israel Association met for its annual conference in Bonn last month, the Greens were the only party in the Bundestag that did not

send a representative, although they were invited. Concern over the Green Party's nationalistic tendencies arises partly from their anti-Western and anti-American slogans which sometimes resemble the slogans of neo-Nazi groups. Many Greens regard American troops in West Germany as an occupying force which makes it impossible for Germany to express its own specific national interests. The U.S. is largely linked by them to a "Jewish lobby" and its "aggressive" client, Israel.

The natural sympathies of most Greens lie with the Third World countries and the "liberation movements." The Palestine Liberation Organization is considered a liberation movement; Zionism is regarded as an oppressive tool of Western imperialism, especially of American interests.

#### Sympathy With The Palestinians

While the Greens do not question Israel's legitimacy as a nation, they give the clear impression that to achieve an understanding with the Arabs the Israelis must give up even more than just the occupied Arab territories.

The typical Green attitude is that justice must be done to the Palestinian refugees who left the territory of Israel in 1948. They are unaware of, or ignore, the fate of Jewish refugees who formerly lived in Arab countries.

According to party spokesman Heinz Suhr, the Greens have not had time to debate the Arab-Israeli conflict in any detail. He said such a debate was highly desirable and would definitely take place sometime in the future. Suhr sharply denied that the Greens have anti-Jewish or anti-Israel attitudes.

#### Israel Denounced As 'Fascist'

Nevertheless, earlier this month a so-called "strategic paper" circulated among the leaders of the Green Party denounced Israel as "fascist and terrorist" and referred to "terrorist policies" of Israel in south Lebanon which allegedly include random arrests and frequent tortures in specially designated concentration camps.

This secret document, which was apparently leaked to the press, has triggered a sharp reaction by the Israeli Ambassador, Yitzhak Ben Ari, and has touched off an internal debate between the "hardliners" and "moderates" within the party. A party spokesman insisted that the document was a "mere suggestion" that was never approved. But the party has not denied that all members of its leading body had seen the "strategic paper" and had failed to react.

Juergen Reents, a Green Party member of the Bundestag who is heading a party delegation to four Middle East countries starting tomorrow, said in a telephone interview that he did not see any reason to repudiate the authors of the document since the party did not officially accept it.

The present trip to the Mideast by the party's delegation, which is composed of hardline radical elements, is a sign that this faction is not pleased by the earlier trip to Israel last July by the more moderate faction. The earlier delegation was headed by Otto Schilly, a Bundestag member who has won a reputation as a pragmatist and a realist.

While Schilly has sharply criticized Israeli policies he has also gone out of his way to denounce anti-Semitic manifestations in his party. According to him, the Green Party is still organizationally fluid and has not yet formally and sharply identified its political position on a number of issues, including the Mideast, and that some who identify themselves as Greens have gravely damaged the reputation of the party.