

**IDF BEGINS FIRST STAGE OF
WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 20 (JTA) — The Israel Defense Force began the first stage of its evacuation of south Lebanon today — a pullback from the coastal town of Sidon and its environs to a new line along the Litani River.

A fleet of heavy army trucks arrived in Sidon to begin loading military materiel and equipment, some of which will be offloaded at the Litani line and the rest brought back to Israel. A senior officer said today that the equipment move would not affect the operational capabilities of IDF units but the soldiers might experience some discomfort because of the removal of heating appliances and other amenities.

The Cabinet, by a vote of 16-6 last Monday, approved a plan for the three-stage withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon. The first stage, which just commenced, is expected to be completed by the middle of next month. There is no timetable for the later two stages.

The IDF is pulling out systematically according to detailed orders issued by the northern command. But the soldiers face harassment as they gradually withdraw from Lebanese territory. Three soldiers were slightly wounded in south Lebanon over the weekend. A soldier of the South Lebanon Army (SLA), an ally of Israel, was wounded today when his patrol was ambushed near Nabatiya.

Jewish Settlers In Upper Galilee Are Nervous

Two Katyusha rocket launchers were discovered Friday in south Lebanon, about three kilometers north of the Israeli town of Metulak. They were aimed at targets in Upper Galilee. Jewish settlers in that region are anxious and understandably nervous.

Major Gen. Uri Orr warned them Friday that terrorists are likely to try to return to the areas evacuated by the IDF. He said it would take them a long time to re-establish the positions they held before Israel invaded Lebanon in June, 1982, and gave assurances that the IDF would do everything possible to thwart them.

But some of the settlers were not reassured of their safety once the IDF leaves Lebanese soil. Orr was told in Kiryat Shemona, "Those of us who live here know that one Katyusha or 30 amounts to the same thing ... One Katyusha no less than 30, will destroy our children, our economy, our lives."

Kiryat Shemona was one of the most heavily hit Israeli border towns during the years when Palestine Liberation Organization terrorists virtually occupied south Lebanon.

Lebanese May Now Agree To UNIFIL in the South

Meanwhile, United Nations Undersecretary General Brian Urquhart met with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the Defense Ministry here today for a discussion of Israel's withdrawal plans. He left for London afterwards to report to Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Urquhart, who was in Beirut last week, told reporters after his talk with Rabin that the Lebanese may now be ready to agree to have the United Nations

Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) patrol areas in south Lebanon evacuated by the IDF. That had been the main issue which brought the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations at Nakura to an impasse.

The Nakura talks are scheduled to resume this Wednesday, at which time the Israeli delegation will inform the Lebanese officially of the IDF's withdrawal plans. It is hoped here that the Lebanese will announce their agreement to Israel's proposals for deployment of UNIFIL. Urquhart's aide, Jean-Claude Aime, was off to Beirut today to inform the Lebanese government of Urquhart's latest meeting with Rabin.

In another development, military sources said today that the IDF would try to sell some of its equipment and installations in south Lebanon to UNIFIL. It would prefer not to abandon to the Lebanese army equipment and installations that cannot be brought back to Israel or are not needed. If no suitable buyer can be found, the equipment and installations may be destroyed before the IDF leaves, the sources said.

**SHARON'S VICTORY AGAINST TIME
MAGAZINE SEEN AS FIRST STEP TOWARD
HIS POLITICAL REHABILITATION**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's victory in the first two rounds of his \$50 million libel suit against Time magazine is seen by many Israelis as a major step toward the political rehabilitation of the man the Kahan Commission found "indirectly responsible" for the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps massacre of September, 1982.

A Manhattan Federal Court jury ruled Wednesday that Time had indeed defamed Sharon when it alleged, in a February 21, 1983 story, that the Israeli defense chief personally encouraged the Christian Phalangists, then Israel's ally in Lebanon, to take revenge on the Palestinians for the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, the Phalangist leader and President-elect of Lebanon.

Last Friday, the jury decided that Time magazine knowingly published false information. It is in session today to determine whether the magazine did so with malicious intent. If the decision is affirmative, the three requirements for proof of libel will have been met. A later hearing by a different jury, will decide what sum Time must pay the plaintiff. The magazine can appeal the verdict.

Moving A Step Closer To His Goal

Whatever the final outcome, the consensus here is that Sharon has been further distanced from the scathing indictment of the Kahan Commission and has moved a step closer to his frankly stated goal of becoming Israel's next Prime Minister.

Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the leader of Likud, one of Sharon's most serious rivals for the Premiership, was the first to congratulate him Wednesday on the New York jury's verdict on the first count of libel. Haim Kaufman, chairman of the Likud Executive, also sent a cable of congratulations.

Sharon himself made the most of his preliminary victory. In an interview from New York with Voice of Israel Radio last Thursday, he repeated his contention that the jury's finding was not simply a personal vindication but a matter of vital importance to the interests of the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

Had other Israeli leaders taken the same steps "10, 20 and 30 years ago, the world press would not have treated us the way it does," Sharon said. His point was that his suit against Time was not a personal mission but rather a mission of national and historical importance for Israel and all Jews.

Sharon told the Voice of Israel Radio last week that he would return to Israel to immerse himself in the many tasks awaiting him as Minister of Commerce and Industry, a senior Cabinet post. The immediate task is the negotiations over a new economic package deal to replace the current wage-price freeze which expires at the end of this month. Sharon's ministry is a key component of a new economic program.

But Sharon is expected to lose no time paving the way to his ultimate goal, the office of Prime Minister. He faces formidable obstacles. Under the unity coalition agreement, Shamir, and only Shamir, is to succeed Labor Party leader Shimon Peres as Premier for the second half of the government's statutory 25-month term of office.

But even if no such restriction existed, neither Likud nor its Herut faction are exclusively Sharon's territory. In addition to overcoming Shamir, which may not be an easy task, Sharon must fend off the challenges of two other powerful Likud-Herut politicians — Deputy Premier David Levy and former Defense Minister and now Minister-Without-Portfolio Moshe Arens — both of whom aspire to the same goal as Sharon.

DEATH OF CAREER OFFICER BRINGS TO 607 THE NUMBER OF IDF FATALITIES SUSTAINED IN SOUTH LEBANON SINCE 1982

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Col. Avraham Elran, severely wounded in south Lebanon last Monday, died at a Haifa hospital Thursday night and was buried at Rishon LeZion Friday. He left a wife and three sons.

The death of the 38-year-old career officer from Zichron Yaacov brought to 607 the number of fatalities sustained by the Israel Defense Force since it invaded Lebanon in June, 1982. Elran was mortally wounded when he went to investigate the scene of two roadside explosions that had just taken the lives of two Israeli soldiers and wounded two others.

He was felled by a 20 kg. explosive charge. Medical officers treated him on the spot where he remained for several hours until a helicopter evacuated him to a Haifa hospital. His condition was listed as critical and remained so until his death.

Elran had served as an infantry battalion commander, deputy commander of a paratroop brigade and commander of an IDF unit in the Jordan Valley.

Urge Protective Clothing For Senior Officers

Senior medical staff at Israeli hospitals have urged the army to insist that all officers and men wear flack jackets and steel helmets in danger zones of south Lebanon to reduce the risk of serious injuries. They said many senior officers have been seen in high risk areas without the protective clothing mandated by army regulations.

Three other incidents in south Lebanon Friday caused no casualties. They were aimed at units of the IDF and of the allied South Lebanon Army (SLA). A Katyusha rocket was fired at an IDF post near Jib Jenin in the eastern sector of the front. An IDF patrol was attacked near the Litani River and an SLA patrol was attacked east of Tyre.

MORDECHAI BENTOV DEAD AT 84

TEL AVIV, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Funeral services were held today for Mordechai Bentov, a former Mapam leader and founder and editor of the movement's newspaper, Al Hamishmar, who died in his home last night at Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek. He was 84.

In a political career that spanned more than half a century, Bentov served in various government Cabinet posts, including Minister of Labor and Reconstruction, of Housing, and of Development. He headed the Knesset's Economic Committee until his resignation from active political life in 1973.

He was the only surviving member of the National Administration of the pre-State Jewish community in Palestine which became the provisional government of Israel after the Declaration of Independence in 1948, of which he was a signator.

Born in Poland in 1900, Bentov led a young group of members of the Hashomer Hatzair movement in 1920 to Palestine where he became a leader of Kibbutz Ha-Artzi. In 1943 he founded and became editor of Mapam's daily newspaper, Al Hamishmar.

Besides his work as a journalist, Bentov authored several books, among them "Binational Solution of the Palestinian Problem" (1946) and "Israel's Economy at the Crossroads." (1965).

He served as a delegate to numerous Zionist Congresses, and as a member of the Round Table Conference on Palestine in London in 1939, and to the Zionist Political Committee at Lake Success in 1947. Among the numerous organizations Bentov was active in over the years was the executive of the Histadrut, the world executive of Hashomer Hatzair, and the World Jewish Congress.

ORTHODOX LEADERS DEPLORE DEFEAT OF AMENDMENT TO THE LAW OF RETURN

NEW YORK, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Orthodox Jewish leaders deplored the defeat in the Knesset of an amendment to the Law of Return which would have added the words "according to halacha" to define who is a Jew. The Orthodox leaders also sharply criticized American Jewish religious and secular leaders who called upon Israeli political leaders to reject the proposed amendment.

The proposed controversial amendment, which would have invalidated conversions performed by non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel and abroad, was defeated by a vote of 62-51 on its first reading in the Knesset last Wednesday. The present Law of Return defines a Jew as a person born of a Jewish mother or converted.

The Agudath Israel of America, in a statement over the weekend, said that the issue is not "Who is a Jew" but "Who is a Convert." The proposed amendment "would have ensured that all who enter Israel under the conversion provision were in fact converted in a manner acceptable to all Jews," Agudath Israel said.

Halachic Viewpoint Described

Its statement declared: "Let the halachic standpoint be crystal clear. All Jews born of a Jewish mother, whether they are observant of Orthodox Jewish practice or not, and regardless of how they label themselves, are fully members of the Jewish people. As for acceptance of outsiders into the ranks of Jewry, conversion according to halacha has always been the single acceptable means for a non-Jew to become part of the Jewish nation."

Agudath Israel, in criticizing the American Jewish non-Orthodox leaders, said it was "shocked and deeply troubled" by a joint statement they issued last week which said, in part, that the proposed change in the Law of Return "would do violence to the principle of Jewish unity and jeopardize the sense of solidarity that binds the Jewish people everywhere to the State of Israel."

In response, Agudath Israel said that these leaders are "promoting the fragmentation" of the Jewish people by "seeking to legitimize a multiplicity of standards in the place of one definition of Jewishness that was universally accepted by Jews through the ages."

Another Response To Amendment's Defeat

In another response to the defeat of the proposed amendment to the Law of Return, the Orthodox Coalition for the Sanctity of Israel declared in a statement that "all Jews, be they Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, secular or unaffiliated, if they are born of a Jewish mother are equal members of the Jewish people.... the amendment to the Law of Return concerns itself only with the correct procedure for conversion."

It added that all conversions "performed by clergymen which are not in keeping with the Jewish code of law (halacha) to be invalid. The converts of such 'ceremonial conversions' cannot be considered members of the Jewish people."

The statement condemned Premier Shimon Peres' "capitulation to Reform and Conservative blackmail" and called upon "all Jews regardless of political affiliation in Israel and in the diaspora to express their outrage" at Peres' "usage of totalitarian demagoguery in forcing members of Parliament to vote contrary to their conscience, thus preventing (the) democratic majority of the Jewish people to achieve a lawful solution to the problem of Who is a Jew."

The statement was signed by Rabbi Isaac Pupko, chairman of the executive committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada; Rabbi Abraham Hecht, president, Rabbinical Alliance of America; Rabbi Zvulun Lieberman of the International Rabbinic Committee for the Safety of Israel; and Rabbi Y. Springer, chairman, Shofar Association of America.

B'NAI B'RITH WELCOMES RENEWED U.S.-USSR TALKS AS A WAY TO HELP SOVIET JEWRY, MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS

PARIS, Jan. 20 (JTA) — The International Council of B'nai B'rith welcomed the renewed talks between the United States and the Soviet Union which it said could help improve the tragic condition of Soviet Jewry and help move forward the peace process in the Middle East.

B'nai B'rith president Gerald Kraft invited the Soviet government to negotiate with B'nai B'rith delegates to find a solution to the human rights problem posed by its treatment of its Jewish community.

Kraft told a news conference here that B'nai B'rith delegates would like to meet "at the highest possible level" with Soviet representatives. He said this is a good time for the Soviet Union "to demonstrate its intentions to the West by easing its restrictions on Soviet Jewry."

He rapped the Kremlin's policies for not only preventing the Jews who want to leave from doing so but also for "making it ever more difficult to survive as Jews."

The International Council held its three-day annual meeting last week in Paris with the participation of some 50 delegates from over a dozen countries. A B'nai B'rith delegation met with the Elysee Palace Secretary General, Jean-Louis Bianco, to share with him some of its worries and preoccupations.

Kraft told the news conference that the International Council believed that Soviet-American contacts on the Middle East would help the peace progress though peace can be achieved "only through direct talks" between the belligerents.

He paid tribute to France's President Francois Mitterrand for improving Franco-Israeli relations and called on other West European nations to follow France's lead and urged them to press the Arabs to initiate "a true peace process" with Israel.

Most of the participants in the three-day meeting are slated to leave this week for a study tour of Israel. Before arriving here, Kraft himself met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo.

TERRORIST GANG FOUND GUILTY OF ESPIONAGE AND ATTEMPTED SABOTAGE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Six Israeli Druze from Galilee and a Lebanese member of a terrorist organization were found guilty of espionage and attempted sabotage by a Haifa district court today. Sentences will be pronounced on Wednesday.

The verdict today was the first public disclosure of the affair which began 18 months ago with the arrests of the suspects. According to the charge sheets, one of their sabotage targets was the 36-story Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv, Israel's tallest building. Other targets included the Haifa oil refineries, Dizengoff Street, a heavily trafficked thoroughfare in Tel Aviv and bus stations in Jerusalem and northern Israel.

The sabotage ring was uncovered in August, 1983, when a Lebanese citizen, identified as Farid el-Halik, was stopped at the Rosh Hanikra border checkpoint trying to drive his Mercedes from Lebanon into Israel. An examination of the vehicle yielded 55 kgs (121 pounds) of high explosives in a reserve gasoline tank. Also found were detonators and electronic sabotage equipment.

An investigation of el-Halik revealed his membership in a terrorist organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, headed by Ahmed Jibril. It also led to the arrests of the six Israeli Druze, some of whom reportedly had served in the Israeli army. The Druze ringleader was identified as Salah Khikias.

The Druze had been recruited individually by Jibril's group and were briefed during visits to Greece. One of the suspects travelled to Damascus for further instructions at Jibril's headquarters.

According to the charges, el-Halik's Mercedes was to have been abandoned in the parking garage under the Shalom Tower with the explosives set to go off by a timing device.

MEXICO CITY (JTA) — The oldest and most important Jewish newspaper, Der Weg (El Camino), has ceased publication because of the difficulty in finding a replacement for its editor, Chaim Lazdeiski, who is immigrating to Israel. The paper was founded in January 1940 by the late Moises Rosenberg and appeared two or three times a week until 1976 when its then publisher, Eliezer Rochman, died. It subsequently became a weekly and appeared every Saturday under Lazdeiski's editorship. Only the Yiddish weekly, Di Shtime, continues publication in Mexico City.

BELGIAN FIRM THAT AIRLIFTED ETHIOPIAN JEWS IS FACING AN ARAB BOYCOTT

BRUSSELS, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Trans European Airways (TEA), the Belgian charter company that airlifted about 7,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel since last November, is facing an Arab boycott and possible blacklisting by the Arab League.

The airlift, which carried the refugees from Khartoum, Sudan to Tel Aviv, with an obligatory stopover at Brussels, was terminated earlier this month because of the worldwide publicity generated by premature disclosure of the operation in Israel. Diplomatic sources here said a boycott of the airline was recommended at a meeting of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Brussels this week.

According to the sources, the Arab League headquarters in Tunis has been asked to study TEA's contribution to the transportation of Ethiopian Jews to Israel, which the Israelis had code-named "Operation Moses." Well informed sources here said TEA's founder and manager, George Gutelman, a 51-year-old Belgian Jew, was summoned to the meeting of Arab Ambassadors to explain his company's role. He refused to appear.

The sources said that TEA and its technical subsidiary, TEAMCO, could be placed on the Arab blacklist as are other Belgian companies doing business with Israel. The Israelis selected TEA for the airlift because of its connections in Sudan where most of the Ethiopian Jews were encamped after escaping from their country. Previously, TEA did a flourishing business carrying Sudanese Moslems on their annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

STATE DEPT WON'T CONFIRM THE U.S. EXPRESSED CONCERN TO ISRAEL THAT ETHIOPIAN JEWS ARE BEING SETTLED ON THE WEST BANK

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20 (JTA) — The State Department has declined to confirm a press report that the Reagan Administration has expressed concern to Israel that Ethiopian Jews are being settled on the West Bank.

But the Department's deputy spokesman Alan Romberg made clear last Friday that the U.S. opposes any type of settlement activity in Judea and Samaria. "The well-known U.S. view is that any and all settlement activity on the West Bank is unhelpful and an obstacle toward a just and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors," Romberg said.

He added that the U.S. "makes every effort to insure that the U.S. government funds are not used for settlement activity on the West Bank." The U.S. has provided this year a \$15 million grant to the United Israel Appeal to be used by the Jewish Agency in Israel toward the resettlement and absorption of refugees, including refugees from Ethiopia, Romberg said.

Diplomatic sources here said that Israel had not received any complaint from the U.S. on the placing of Ethiopian Jews on the West Bank and expressed astonishment that a fuss could be made over such a small number of people.

It was noted that the Ethiopian immigrants are being placed in five absorption centers, only one of which, Kiryat Arba, is on the West Bank, and the center is only housing 50 to 60 families. It was also pointed out that Israel has always maintained that Jews have a right to live anywhere in Eretz Israel.

Romberg's comments came on his last day as deputy spokesman, a post he held for three and a half years serving under Dean Fischer, Secretary of State Alexander Haig's spokesman, and John Hughes, the spokesman for Secretary of State George Shultz until recently.

PIONEER WOMEN/NA'AMAT ALLOCATES \$200,000 FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWRY RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL

NEW YORK, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Pioneer Women/Na'amat has transmitted a special grant of \$200,000 for newly-arrived Ethiopian Jews, it was announced by Phyllis Sutker, national president. The funds were allocated in response to information recently made public by Na'amat-Pioneer Women officials in Israel regarding the major role of the organization in absorbing Ethiopian Jews.

Some 800 Ethiopian children are currently enrolled in day care centers under the sponsorship of Na'amat-Pioneer Women, according to Masha Lubelsky, secretary-general.

She explained: "The daily play activities and interaction with Israeli children are a primary means for transmitting the new language and customs to the small immigrants, while freeing their parents to study in Hebrew ulpan courses and vocational training programs."

Half of the \$200,000 grant has been allocated by Pioneer Women/Na'amat's Golda Meir Child Development Fund, which will provide the special pedagogical training and tools to successfully absorb the Ethiopian immigrants.

It was also announced that Na'amat-Pioneer Women volunteers — a national network of thousands of women and teenagers — are dedicating their activities in the coming year to work with Ethiopian families. At 30 Na'amat-Pioneer Women branches throughout the country, staff and volunteers are providing essential services to Ethiopian families, easing their adjustment to Israeli society.

TEL AVIV MACCABI BASKETBALL TEAM SPLIT TWO GAMES WITH MOSCOW'S TEAM

TEL AVIV, Jan. 20 (JTA) — Israel's champion Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball team split two games with the Soviet Union's TSKA Moscow team, winning the second last Thursday 87-81 at the European Championship Games played in Deurne, near Antwerp. The Israeli team lost to their Soviet rivals by 12 points the previous night.

The Soviets have always refused to come to Israel to play basketball matches against the local teams, and have not allowed the Israelis to play inside the Soviet Union. Thus the selection of a "neutral" European venue, chosen for both "home" and "away" games.

The Tel Aviv Maccabi team has beaten the Soviet champion team on previous occasions, despite the fact that the Soviet players, some well over six feet tall, tower head and shoulders over most of the Israeli team, including its star players from the United States.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's version of the "Oscar" has gone to the locally produced movie "Beyond the Walls," a story of Jews and Arabs in prison. Uri Barabash was cited as best director and the two principal performers, Amon Zadok and Mohammad Bekri shared the best actor award. The film itself was a box office hit. Israel's "Oscar" was instituted 10 years ago.