

**VIOLENCE AGAINST ISRAELI TROOPS
IN LEBANON CONTINUES; EXPLOSION
WRECKS MOSQUE, 12 KILLED, 45 HURT**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 4 (JTA) — Attacks on Israel Defense Force units continued to escalate in south Lebanon last night and this morning despite the Cabinet's decision yesterday to begin the second stage of the Israel Defense Force's withdrawal from south Lebanon immediately. There were no Israeli casualties reported in any of the incidents.

The situation was complicated by an explosion today which wrecked a mosque killing at least 12 persons and injuring 45 in Marrake village, 14 kilometers east of Tyre. The blast, caused by an estimated 50 kilograms of high explosives, occurred less than two days after IDF units conducted a massive search of the Shiite village, killing one Shiite Moslem guerrilla and arresting 17 other suspects. The Israelis imposed a 24 hour curfew on the town after seizing large quantities of weapons and ammunition.

Lebanese sources, including the Christian Phalangists, Israel's one-time ally, promptly blamed the IDF for the carnage. The fatalities were said to include several leaders of the Shiite militia, Amal, who were meeting on the second floor of the building at the time. A spokesperson for the IDF denied any Israeli involvement, pointing out that no IDF personnel were in the village today.

But Muhammad Mahdi Shamus-A-Din, spiritual leader of the Lebanese Shiites, called today for a "jihad" (holy war) against the Israelis. Initial reports said the blast occurred inside the mosque. Later reports said a booby-trapped car blew up just outside the building during a funeral procession.

Guerrilla Killed In Clash

A Lebanese guerrilla was killed in a clash with an IDF patrol near the Kasmiye bridge over the Litani River yesterday. There were five more attacks on IDF patrols or positions in south Lebanon last night and this morning and four during the course of the day. In the latest of these, a patrol was fired upon north of Adassiyeh village, another in the center of Tyre and a grenade was thrown at the building housing the IDF liaison unit in Tyre.

Later this afternoon, a patrol came under fire near Bidyas village, the site of two attacks yesterday. The IDF headquarters in Nabatiya was also hit twice in the past 12 hours, marking the 23rd and 24th times the building has been a target in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Premier Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin offered different timetables for completion of the second stage of the IDF's withdrawal which involves the evacuation of the eastern sector of south Lebanon where the Israelis face Syrian forces across the Bekaa valley.

Peres, addressing high school students in Eilat today said the second stage should be completed within a few weeks, weather permitting. Rabin, who was touring Galilee today, told reporters the pace of the withdrawal would depend on tactical

questions and stage two would be completed within two to three months. Both ministers said the government would decide on the third and final stage—back to the international border—after the second stage has been accomplished. According to Rabin, all Israeli soldiers will be home by Rosh Hashana, eight months from now.

Peres explained that weather is an important factor. It is almost impossible to dismantle and transport equipment from such sites as the IDF's observation and listening post atop Mt. Barukh in the bitter cold and snow that prevails there. He also said that the IDF's "iron fist" policy to deal harshly with terrorists and guerrillas in south Lebanon might blemish Israel's image in the short run but is essential in the long run to protect the lives of Israel's soldiers while they remain in Lebanon.

Rabin told residents of Metullah in Upper Galilee that the IDF could not guarantee that a stray Katyusha rocket or two would never again fall on Jewish towns in the north. But it would prevent the establishment of "organized terrorism" across the border, he said.

The Defense Minister stressed that Israel wants peace on both sides of the border. "They (the Lebanese) have two choices. Either there will be peace on both sides — no terrorist acts by them against us— or there will be sharp reactions on our part, not only to protect our soldiers as long as they are in Lebanon but in the future as well," he said.

Peres, in his talk, lashed out at President Amin Gemayel of Lebanon for calling for attacks on the IDF when he knows it is on the way out of his country. He said he was "shocked" by Gemayel's ingratitude, especially since it was Israel which, at the request of his late brother, the assassinated President-elect Bashir Gemayel, that Israel helped put down attacks on Lebanese Christians over the past two years.

U.S. WELCOMES ISRAELI DECISION

By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 4 (JTA) — The Reagan Administration today welcomed the Israeli Cabinet decision to proceed immediately with the second stage of its troop withdrawal from south Lebanon.

It also reiterated previous appeals to all parties for restraint and cooperation in achieving a coordinated pull out of the Israel Defense Force from the remaining Lebanese territory they occupy.

"We welcome the announcement of the second stage of the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon which marks a further step in Israel's plan for a full withdrawal," State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said.

In an apparent reference to the recent escalation of attacks by Shiite guerrillas against Israeli forces in south Lebanon and the "iron fist" policy Israel has adopted in response, Kalb said, "We call on all parties to exercise restraint and break the cycle of action and reaction which has resulted in the loss of life and destruction of property."

Kalb also urged "the parties to take advantage of the Nakura process," a reference to the now suspended Lebanese-Israeli talks at Nakura held under the auspices of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, "to assist in arranging a coordinated withdrawal." He declined to comment when asked if the Administration viewed Israel's recent actions in south

Lebanon as justified. Kalb, meanwhile, in response to a question on last weekend's closure of the Arab university of Bir Zeit on the West Bank, read a prepared statement which said: "As we have said before, we regret anything which could affect the educational process on the West Bank or interfere with the principle of academic freedom."

"Disruption of the education process can only harm the interests of those who genuinely seek educational opportunities," the statement said. "We urge that the university be reopened as rapidly as possible."

Israeli authorities closed the university last weekend, as punishment for an anti-Israeli exhibit organized by the students. The exhibit was to take place last Saturday on two campuses of the university, to mark the founding of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, led by Nayef Hawatmeh.

An army search on Friday night led to the discovery of scores of books calling for rebellion in the West Bank and containing instructions on how to prepare bombs. The exhibit also included pamphlets and posters condoning the armed struggle against the Jewish State.

During the search, the army found in the premises of the university some 37 people preparing the exhibit, some of them students, others students from other universities, and the rest non-students. All were arrested. Another 12 students were arrested in their homes.

CABINET ARGUES OVER VALUE OF MUBARAK'S PEACE MOVE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- The Labor-Likud unity government was embroiled in angry recriminations at yesterday's Cabinet session over the value of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's recent peace initiative and Egypt's apparently adamant stand in its border dispute with Israel over the tiny Taba region.

Premier Shimon Peres, who may have gone out on a limb last week with his enthusiastic endorsement of Mubarak's suggestion that a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation negotiate with Israel, appears to be taking a lower profile. Likud hardliners are heaping scorn on Mubarak's proposals, questioning Egypt's good faith and suggesting that Peres and his fellow Laborites -- and Minister-Without-Portfolio Ezer Weizman of the Yahad faction -- responded to Mubarak naively.

Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir accused Peres and his colleagues of "drunken euphoria" over the Mubarak initiative. Other Likud ministers derided the meeting Peres had last week with Mubarak's personal emissary, Ossama El-Baz.

Sources close to the Premier said he is less concerned with Likud's cynicism than the unpredictability of events and is therefore anxious to lower expectations. The next crucial diplomatic event is Mubarak's summit meeting with King Hussein of Jordan later this week. It is impossible to forecast the Hashemite ruler's position at the meeting where Mubarak presumably will press for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating team.

No New Israeli Stance Needed

Peres clearly does not want to find himself embarrassed by a totally negative Hussein, which would only add credibility to the Likud attacks on his policy. Peres stressed to the Cabinet yesterday that the Egyptian initiative did not require Israel to adopt any new positions at this stage. His positive

response to Mubarak related to a suggestion that Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation meet in Cairo, with U.S. participation.

But the Egyptian leader, who will meet President Reagan in Washington on March 12, is also expected to urge the Americans to meet first with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in Washington and then invite Israel to join the talks.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ronnie Milo of Likud said in a statement released last night that the Egyptians apparently consider the Israelis "naifs." He charged that their initiative was intended solely to impress U.S. public opinion in advance of Mubarak's visit to Washington next week.

What transpired at Peres' meeting here with El Baz has not been disclosed. Minister-Without-Portfolio Moshe Arens, a Likud hardliner who sat in at the meeting, reportedly spoke of it with unconcealed derision afterwards. Shamir, who was visiting Europe at the time, faulted an aide of Peres for allegedly telling a foreign reporter that the Camp David accords would be Israel's "opening position" at future peace talks. Justice Minister Moshe Nissim, also of Likud, criticized what he discerned as the Premier's readiness to abandon Camp David as the sole basis of Israeli policy. Likud has always insisted that talks with any of Israel's neighbors must be within the Camp David framework.

Shamir Warns Against Euphoria

Shamir warned the Cabinet yesterday against attempts to create euphoria. "I do not say this gladly. I too want to see an improvement in relations with Egypt. But there is nothing practical or operative in Egypt's latest proposals" he said.

The Taba issue is also souring attempts to thaw the "cold peace" with Cairo. Peres repeatedly has suggested that Israel and Egypt establish a joint administration over the disputed area, a sliver of beach on the Gulf of Aqaba which Egypt claims is part of Sinai. According to Peres, a joint administration would make Taba "a symbolic oasis of peace" on their common border and would remain in force whatever the outcome of the dispute over sovereignty.

Israel also reportedly advanced a proposal that the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) which presently monitors Sinai, extend its role to Taba.

All indications are that Cairo has not responded favorably to these proposals. It is understood, unofficially, that Peres and his senior aides have indicated that Israel would be prepared to submit the Taba dispute to international arbitration -- as Egypt has been insisting all along -- if this is done in the context of a "broad basket" of improved bilateral relations between the two countries.

SOVIET JEWS ASK FOR ISRAELI CITIZENSHIP

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- Hundreds of Soviet Jews have openly expressed the wish to become Israeli citizens, former Prisoner of Zion Yosef Mendelovich told President Chaim Herzog today.

Mendelovich presented Herzog with his new book, describing his experience in the Soviet prison.

Mendelovich said some 600 aliya activists have openly asked the Israeli authorities to grant them Israeli citizenship. Mendelovich suggested that this should be used in the campaign to free Soviet Jewry by recruiting the help of world public opinion.

SPECIAL REPORT ROMANIA'S DWINDLING JEWISH COMMUNITY UNIQUE IN WORLD

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- The facts and figures pertaining to the Jewish community of Rumania are unique in every respect; unique in the Jewish world, unique in the Communist world, and unique in Rumania itself.

Before World War II there were 800,000 Jews in Rumania. Half of them perished in the Holocaust. Of those who survived almost all have emigrated to Israel -- with the blessing of the Rumanian government.

Today some 26,000 Jews still live in Rumania. Half live in Bucharest, the capital. The rest are spread among more than 50 provincial towns. Virtually all of them are members of the organized Jewish community and actively participate in Jewish communal, religious and cultural life -- again with the blessing of President Nicolae Ceausescu's hardline communist regime.

More than half of the Jews are more than 60 years of age. Many thousands of them directly benefit in vital, material ways from a gamut of welfare programs, from kosher kitchens to medical care, funded in large part by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) -- once again with the full consent of the Rumanian authorities.

'Program Of Survival'

"It is quite literally a program of survival," a Rumanian Jewish official told this reporter during a recent visit to Bucharest, referring to the welfare programs. "Without this aid, many of the elderly recipients would be condemned to starve."

Given the bitterly harsh climatic conditions prevailing across Rumania this winter, and the palpably evident economic difficulties which confront most of its citizens, these dramatic words seemed no exaggeration whatever.

The annual cost of the totality of the welfare programs is in the order of \$5 million. Of this the JDC contributes \$4 million, and the Jewish Community Federation of Rumania the remaining million. (The community is sometimes the beneficiary of bequests, and therefore holds funds of its own.)

The programs include aid in cash. This alone accounts for some 30 percent of the outlay. Some 5,000 persons are eligible: Holocaust refugees; elderly couples or individuals whose families have moved abroad, usually to Israel; persons who, for whatever reason, do not qualify for the full state pension receivable on the basis of a minimum of 25 working years.

"We are guided by two principles," says Sami Edelstein, head of the Jewish Federations assistance department. "Strict adherence to criteria (for eligibility), and strict maintenance of human dignity."

Aid Packages

Thus the monthly aid grants are sent, by mail, to recipients' homes, just like the state pensions, thereby obviating the sometimes embarrassing need to come to the federation offices to collect them.

Aid packages are sent out eight times a year, six times to coincide with the major Jewish festivals, and once in midsummer and once in mid-winter, to bridge the long dry seasons between festivals.

The criteria of need are determined by a committee comprising Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, Federation president Theodore Blumenfeld, and assistance department head Edelstein. The final arbiter is the rabbi, who, since his election to office in the storms and dangerous days of the late forties, has led this community with a firm hand -- and with an even firmer and more unwavering vision of its ultimate redemption: transplanted almost in its entirety in Israel.

The packages contain foodstuffs, purchased from government stores. They each weigh some 40 pounds and are worth some \$20. Married couples receive double packages.

Once a year, persons meeting the criteria are invited to their local federation offices to select clothing and shoes. Here, too, the precious principle of dignity is rigorously maintained: all the clothing is brand new most of it manufactured in Rumania, though some is sent over from the United States by the JDC, and people are invited in small groups, to eliminate crowding or embarrassment.

Meals on wheels, bringing hot midday meals to elderly housebound Jews, is literally a lifesaver in many cases. The meals are prepared in the Kosher restaurants which are maintained in all the major Rumanian communities, and dispatched to recipients' homes by minibuses owned by the community.

There are ten restaurants around the country, offering substantial and tasty kosher meals every day to anyone who comes by. And thousands of Jews do. By no means all of them are old or weak: younger people too find the convenience and ambience of the Jewish restaurant attractive and pleasant.

Those who can pay the full 22 lei (about \$1.80) for their meal. Most people, however, pay far less, and some pay nothing.

The criteria for payment are determined by a discreet means test. Yet -- such is the fastidious concern for human dignity -- people sitting around the same table and enjoying the same meal cannot know what each of them paid for that meal. The system of ticketing is specifically designed to conceal this information.

Help For The Home-Bound

The assistance department hires home-helpers to clean, cook and shop for elderly home-bound or bed-ridden Jews. Four hundred homes in the capital and another 300 in the provinces benefit from this service.

The Federation employs, in addition, six social workers who visit recipients and potential recipients of the various aid programs. These social workers are all retired people themselves (in Rumania retirement age is 60 for men and 57 for women), boosting their pensions by doing this work -- but doing it, as is immediately and abundantly apparent, much more out of love and devotion than for the material benefit.

Edelstein explains that the federation cannot attract young, professional social workers "because we can't afford to pay as much as the government." He himself is a former senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Trade who, when he retired, was eagerly enlisted by Rabbi Rosen to head up the assistance department.

A medical center or polyclinic in Bucharest has doctors who are also almost all retirees. Among their number are some of the country's better-known specialists, including internationally-renowned virologist Prof. Nikolai Cajal, a member of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences.

While ostensibly health care is provided free by the state to all its citizens, the elderly and/or needy Jews are eligible to attend the clinic, or call its physicians

to their homes, enjoy a considerably more efficient, and immeasurably more devoted, service. The clinic, moreover, is linked to two pharmacies which dispense its doctors' prescriptions. The drugs, like the medical diagnoses and treatments, are all free for all eligible patients -- and are not available, even for money, for people not adjudged eligible.

With 2,000 mostly young Romanian Jewish immigrants having left for Israel in 1984 alone, and with only 50 Jewish births having been registered throughout the country, Cajal predicts the virtual end of this entire, impressive, moving structure of organized Jewish life within a decade. A combination of aliyah and biology will see to that, he says.

Israeli experts tend to agree. They feel there is potential for a further 10,000 Romanian Jewish immigrants to Israel at most, with the remainder of the community intent on living out their lives in Romania.

Rabbi Rosen does not agree with the essence of this prognosis. But he predicts a slower shrinkage. In ten years time, he believes, there will still be a Jewish population of 15,000.

"Whether or not there will still be organized, flourishing communal and religious Jewish life -- that depends on us," Rosen says. "Even the present situation is unnatural, almost miraculous. A community of 26,000 maintaining active Jewish centers in 68 separate places -- complete with synagogues and social services."

Rosen believes passionately that the key to Romanian Jewry's monumental success -- and the statistics, after all, add up to an incredible success-story, especially in view of the objective circumstances -- has been his unrelenting fight to preserve the spiritual heritage. His greatest pride and joy are the afterschool classes, usually held in synagogues, where the ever-dwindling young generation imbibes the fundamentals of their people's culture and traditions.

"They may not become great scholars (talmidei Hahamim)," Rosen said in a speech at the Choral Synagogue last month in the presence of Israeli Premier Shimon Peres. "But they grow up with a profound knowledge of what it means to be Jewish -- and a profound commitment and identity."

Jewish Music Encouraged

Rosen's particular innovation, in terms of Jewish education in trying circumstances, has been his encouragement of music and song. All the larger communities boast Jewish youth choirs. In Bucharest there are several.

Enormous effort and devotion go into rehearsing, songwriting, organizing, and periodically performing -- especially on the festivals and whenever a distinguished visitor comes by, from Israel or the West. And the enthusiasm of the young chorists and musicians is infectious, regularly rousing audiences of Jews, young and old (mostly old), to join in with the songs of Zion, the Yiddish lieder and the liturgical tunes that fill the grand old synagogues with the sounds of yesterday -- and of tomorrows.

CONTROVERSY HEATS UP OVER CONVERSION FOR ETHIOPIAN JEWS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 4 (JTA) -- The controversy over whether the thousands of Ethiopian Jews who have just immigrated to Israel must undergo "Lehuma" -- a form of conversion ritual -- was heightened over the weekend when Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapiro sharply criticized two former Chief

Rabbis for maintaining it was not required. Shapiro said in an interview published in the religious daily Hatzofeh that he could not understand why former Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren (Ashkenazic) and Ovadia Yosef (Sephardic) have reversed what he claimed was their own long-standing positions on the issue.

According to Shapiro, the conversion requirement for Ethiopian Jews was upheld by all past Chief Rabbis of Israel and is the universal view of Torah scholars abroad.

Goren and Yosef, in separate public statements, have disagreed with a recent ruling by the 10-man Chief Rabbinate Council which has caused anger and distress among the Ethiopian emigres. The Council, meeting under the chairmanship of Shapiro and Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, held that the newly arrived Ethiopian Jews must undergo ritual immersion and swear a formal undertaking to observe halacha -- religious law.

The Council agreed that the males need not undergo bloodletting, symbolic of circumcision, inasmuch as all Ethiopian Jews have been circumcized. Goren and Yosef, citing rabbinic sages of the past, declared that the Ethiopians are fully Jewish and require no conversion, symbolic or otherwise.

"As far as I know," Shapiro said, "the entire Torah world is shocked by (Goren's and Yosef's reversal) and their determination that (the Ethiopians) are full Jews without the need for any process whatsoever..."

Immigrants Feel Insulted

The immigrants themselves say that having suffered so much in their native country for being Jews it is an insult and travesty to have their Judaism impugned in Israel. Lehuma is a halachic concept applied when the smallest doubt exists of a person's Jewish identity. Shapiro said conversion was required because of the possibility that the practices of Ethiopian Jews in matters of marriage and divorce were not according to accepted halachic standards.

He claimed further that doubt about their authenticity as Jews was firmly grounded because gentiles had intermingled with Ethiopian Jews over the past several hundred years.

EILAT TO BECOME DUTY FREE PORT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 4 (JTA) -- Premier Shimon Peres announced in Eilat today that Israel's southernmost port town would become a free trade zone within the next two months.

When the arrangement comes into force in April, value added tax and employers taxes will be cancelled. Income tax and company taxes will be reduced, cheap fuel will be available to aircraft landing there, and special incentives will be available for entrepreneurs.

A customs station will be established on the road leading north from the city, the only route available by land, where Israelis returning to the rest of the country will be checked and charged duties on goods bought at duty-free shops in the town.

ACTIVIST LEAVES USSR

NEW YORK, March 4 (JTA) -- Inna Bruckhuim, virtually the only Soviet Jewish activist to have received an exit visa in recent months, arrived in Vienna today, according to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. She arrived with her husband Dmitry Khazkin. Both were unofficial teachers of Judaism in Moscow.