

LABOR GAINS 5 PERCENT, LIKUD LOSES 5 PERCENT IN HISTADRUT ELECTIONS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 14 (JTA) — Likud took a sound drubbing in yesterday's Histadrut elections and its control of local labor councils was reduced from two to one.

With 90 percent of the vote counted, the Labor Party had won 66.7 percent of the 1,501 delegates to the Histadrut Conference, the labor federation's highest policy-making body, and Likud 21.4 percent. This represents a five percent gain for Labor and a five percent loss for Likud. Absentee ballots and soldiers' votes yet to be tallied are not expected to change the results.

In the outgoing conference, elected four years ago, Labor's edge over Likud was 61.98 percent to 26.35 percent. Pundits were saying before yesterday's elections that if Labor substantially increased its lead over Likud, the results would have national political implications that could affect the future of the Labor-Likud unity coalition government.

Labor And Likud Reactions

Labor leaders, including Premier Shimon Peres and incumbent Histadrut Secretary General Yisrael Kessar, now assured of election to a full four-year term, were predictably elated that the exit-poll forecasts of a big Labor victory last night were borne out by the vote count.

Deputy Premier and Housing Minister David Levy of Likud, brushing aside Likud's losses, stressed that his party "broke the 20 percent barrier." He said the results showed that "The Likud is a hard nut to crack."

In the polling for local labor councils in 72 districts around the country, Likud lost the only two it previously controlled, but picked up one, at Ofakim.

Communist Party Gains

Of the smaller parties running in the elections, only the Hadash (Communist) Party gained. It won 4.1 percent of the delegates, up from 3.58 percent in the outgoing conference. The Shinui Party which won 2.16 percent four years ago, was shut out in yesterday's balloting. It polled only 1.3 percent of the vote, well below the two percent minimum required for representation in the Histadrut Conference.

The combined Civil Rights Movement-Sheli list, running for the first time in a Histadrut election, barely made it with 2.7 percent of the vote. Another first-time runner, the rightwing Tehiya Party, came close to the borderline with 1.9 percent of the votes as of noon today. It may pick up a few more when the last ballots are counted and break the two percent barrier.

The Histadrut Conference, which elects the labor federation's governing bodies is officially concerned with local economic and social issues and the welfare of Israel's work force, 85 percent of which belongs to Histadrut unions.

Some observers, nevertheless, see it as an analogue of the Knesset and interpret yesterday's election results to indicate a slight but not insignificant rise in the popularity of the Labor Party since Peres became Premier nine months ago.

They see further polarization between Labor and Likud, the two major components of the unity government and the largest parties in the Knesset.

According to these observers, while it is by no means certain or even probable at this point, the Histadrut election results may lead to the breakup of the unity coalition and new Knesset elections before Peres is obliged to hand over the Premiership to Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir next year, under the coalition agreement.

While Likud leaders are putting the best possible face on the election results, they can hardly take heart from the fact that one of the two labor councils they lost was Beth Shean, hometown of Levy who is a rising power in Likud's Herut wing. They failed to win in northern border localities such as Kiryat Shemona where they won handsomely in the 1981 and 1984 Knesset elections on the slogan "no more Katyushas (rockets) in Galilee."

Likud, however, campaigned more vigorously than Labor for the Histadrut vote, sending several of their most popular Cabinet ministers to the hustings. Labor did not follow suit in what was seen as a low key, lackluster campaign by all participants.

New Tough Economic Measures Expected

With Histadrut firmly in the hands of Labor for the next four years, economists and the general public expect new, tough economic and fiscal measures by Likud Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai aimed at curing the ailing economy.

Those measures, which could result in substantial unemployment, would be taken with the assent or at least the acquiescence of Peres and Histadrut chief Kessar who understand as well as anybody the need for drastic economic cutbacks and reforms.

One lesson learned from yesterday's elections was that a public holiday need not be declared in order to get Israelis to the polls. While the voting was sluggish during the day, it picked up toward evening.

More than 50 percent of the 1.5 million eligible voters turned out and by the time all of the ballots are counted, a turn-out of close to 56 percent is expected. This would be about the same as the voter turn-out in Knesset elections for which a public holiday is declared.

COMPTROLLER'S REPORT RAPS ISRAELI GENERAL STAFF, DEFE. . . ESTABLISHMENT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 14 (JTA) — The lessons learned from the Lebanon war are not being applied to the Israel Defense Force, State Comptroller Yitzhak Tunik charged in a report released today highly critical of the General Staff and the defense establishment.

The 90-page report expressed concern about the cumulative effects on the IDF's operational capability as a result of defense budget cuts and the war in Lebanon

and the General Staff's lack of emphasis on the lessons learned. According to Tunik, the Chief of Staff's demand that every change in training programs must be brought to him personally for prior approval makes the process cumbersome. He found that the General Staff has neither set priorities nor provided the wherewithal for the lessons to be incorporated into doctrine. Although the IDF has been increased in size, its training budget has been reduced with profound effects on the quality of the army, particularly its reserve forces, the Comptroller said.

He criticized the shortage of simulators which would allow reservists to train at their bases rather than going into the field for training in tanks and other expensive heavy equipment. The report quotes the head of the IDF's Manpower Division that the already serious problem of skilled manpower will worsen because of budget cuts and competition from the civilian sector of industry.

The report found no coordination between the army and the education system to solve the growing lack of qualified, skilled technical manpower. It recommends the creation of a national body to deal specifically with the need for skilled manpower in the armed forces.

ALLEGED MEMBERS OF JEWISH UNDERGROUND FIRE THEIR LAWYERS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 14 (JTA) — Alleged members of a Jewish terrorist underground on trial for a series of violent acts and conspiracies against Arab civilians in the West Bank, fired their lawyers yesterday because of an unfavorable ruling by the three judge panel hearing the case.

Judges Yaacov Bazak, Shmuel Finkelman and Zvi Cohen dismissed defense counsels' motions to introduce evidence on the state of security of Jewish settlers in the West Bank prior to the alleged terrorist attacks. The defendants are charged with, among other offenses, car bombings that crippled two Arab mayors and conspiracy to blow up Islamic shrines on the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem.

The judges ruled that evidence with respect to the settlers' security would be irrelevant because it could not justify the accused taking the law into their own hands. The defense lawyers were dismissed because their entire brief was built around the state of security for Jewish settlers in the administered territories. The No. 1 defendant, Menachem Livni, alleged ringleader of the underground, called the judges' decision "unjust and immoral."

During the court session Sunday, the No. 2 defendant, Yehuda Etzion, admitted he had "participated in chopping off the legs of murderers." He was referring to the car bombing in June, 1980 that severely injured Mayor, Bassam Shaka of Nablus who lost both of his legs.

According to Etzion that act was consonant with the aims of the nation of Israel in this generation of its renaissance. He described the plot to destroy the shrines on the Temple Mount as a "cleansing" of a Jewish holy site.

Meanwhile, Inspector Meir Lavie of the Border Police was demoted and severely reprimanded for allowing a group of the trial defendants to stop off at a beach for a swim last week while they were being transported in his custody from a court session to their jail. Lavie, who was also fined, said he had acted "innocently." The Minister of Police and the police chief have under consideration a recommendation that he be dismissed from the force.

NEW FOREST TO COMMEMORATE ETHIOPIAN JEWS WHO DIED EN ROUTE TO ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, May 14 (JTA) — The many hundreds of Ethiopian Jews who died of hunger, disease and weakness during the long trek en route to Israel are to be commemorated in a new forest outside Jerusalem.

The Jewish National Fund has earmarked a site near Kibbutz Ramat Rahel for this project, which will include trees and a stone monument. The project is a joint initiative of the JNF and the Ministry of Absorption.

According to Haaretz, estimates of the number of Ethiopian immigrants who died on their way to Israel vary from 300 to 600. Most of them, the paper says, were very old or very young.

Jerusalem Day, which will be celebrated on Sunday, is to have an Ethiopian flavor — with many of the new arrivals to be taken by train from various places in the north of the country to the capital. For some it will be their first train journey, and for some their first visit to the holy city.

REAGAN'S AND KOHL'S VISIT TO BITBURG 'LIFTED THE SCAB ON DARK CORNERS ...'

NEW YORK, May 14 (JTA) — The visit by President Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the Bitburg military cemetery on May 5 "lifted the scab on dark corners of recent German history" revealing vindictive anti-Semitism just beneath the surface in that Bavarian town, according to a first-hand report by NBC News correspondent Marvin Kalb which confirms the worst fears of Jews and others who had protested against Reagan's visit.

Kalb, in an op-ed page column in the New York Times Tuesday, said he visited the cemetery the morning after Reagan and Kohl were there and talked to Germans, young, middle-aged and old about the episode.

He wrote that the cemetery which had been "largely ignored" for years, has become "an instant shrine." He saw "small flower pots marking many flat graves, 49 of them honoring Waffen SS troops. By the end of my visit, many hundreds of Germans and occasional Americans from the nearby Air Force base paused before the wreaths. Some took pictures. Mothers hushed children. A religious air seemed to saturate the place."

Kalb reported that "Six feet to the left of the President's wreath stood an equally impressive one. Across its banner: 'To the Waffen SS who fell at Leningrad.' No more than a foot to the right of the Chancellor's was another wreath: 'For the fallen comrades of the Waffen SS.'"

He disclosed that both wreaths "had been placed in the chapel, out of sight, hours before the President arrived. They were restored to their original places of honor only hours after he left ..."

A Disturbing Conversation

Most disturbing was Kalb's report of a conversation with natives of Bitburg. One, "who looked to be in his 20's," is quoted as saying, "We Germans and Americans had been cooperating very well" — he lowered his voice — "until the Jews began to make trouble."

"Another Bitburger zeroed in on Elie Wiesel. 'Imagine the nerve of a Jew lecturing President Reagan. I saw him on television making trouble the way they all do.'"

"An old woman complained that Mr. Reagan had spent only eight minutes at the cemetery. 'You know why the visit had to be cut back? Because of the Jews.' She stalked away to join a group of friends nodding in agreement.

"A man with a cane stopped and said: 'If they don't like it here, the Jews, let them go away. We

were better off without them in Germany.' There are only 28,000 left, he was reminded. 'Too many,' he replied."

Kalb reported that the people of Bitburg are pleased that Reagan did not yield to pressure to cancel his visit. "But it's clear they resent their new notoriety -- and equally clear whom they consider responsible for the unwelcome changes: the Jews and media. The Jews are seen as a group separate from Germans and Americans -- an indigestible lump, a foreign body. The media are seen as intrusive and irresponsible and, somehow, controlled by the Jews," Kalb wrote.

EFFORTS TO TRACK DOWN MENGELE LAUDED

NEW YORK, May 14 (JTA) -- Brooklyn District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman believes that "The President of the United States must take personal steps" to make sure that the government of Paraguay understands that the American people want Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele, the Auschwitz death camp doctor, brought to justice.

Holtzman, a member of Congress until 1981 and of the House Judiciary Committee, was instrumental in getting the Justice Department to crack down on war criminals living in the United States after obtaining entry and in many cases citizenship by lying about their Nazi past.

In a statement just released, she noted that "Finally, after 40 years, the U.S. has agreed to participate in a coordinated, comprehensive search for the infamous Dr. Mengele" who is believed to be living in Paraguay.

She was referring to the coordinated effort recently undertaken by the U.S., Israel and West Germany to track down Mengele and bring him to justice. The representatives of the Attorneys General of the three countries met for two days in Frankfurt last week and agreed to exchange information on the legal and investigative levels with the goal of eventually having Mengele tried for "crimes against humanity."

Says Reagan Must Take Steps

Holtzman said, "Having travelled to Paraguay last November, I am convinced that Mengele is alive and that he can be found. I am pleased that the U.S., Israel and West Germany have agreed to undertake this search for him. This action is significant because it is a recognition that the evil done by Mengele can never be forgotten."

Holtzman added that she was "confident that this international effort will be carried out with vigor and dedication (but) it may not be enough. Paraguay may not be persuaded by the desires of the prosecutors alone to bring Mengele to justice. The President of the United States must take personal steps to insure that Paraguay understands that the American people and government want Mengele brought to justice."

'Wanted' Posters To Be Placed In Papers

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, in another step in its efforts to track down Mengele, announced that it will place full-page "Wanted" poster ads in major newspapers in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Chile next week pointing out that there is now a total of \$2,375,000 in rewards offered for information leading to Mengele's arrest and extradition.

The posters, which carry a photograph of the 74-year-old Mengele in his 40's and an artist's sketch of how he might look now, details his crimes which include the selection of Auschwitz victims for the gas chambers and inhuman medical experiments which proved fatal or left the victims physically and psychologically maimed for life.

The Wiesenthal Center also applauded the joint efforts by the U.S., Israel and West Germany and sent telegrams to President Reagan, Israeli Premier Shimon Peres and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl urging them to establish a joint "Mengele Strike Force."

MOBUTU AND HERZOG SIGN THREE COOPERATION ACCORDS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 14 (JTA) -- Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko ended the official part of his state visit to Israel today by signing, with President Chaim Herzog, three cooperation accords -- in the areas of aviation, investment, and technical training.

Mobutu, who arrived here Sunday at the head of a large delegation, will spend the rest of the week as the private guest of British-Jewish businessman Leon Tamman at Tamman's recently opened Daniel Towers Hotel at Herzliya. Tamman is said to have business interests in Zaire, and Mobutu and his aides are greatly interested in attracting other Israeli and overseas investors to consider projects in Zaire.

The visiting President was slightly ill yesterday-- which prevented him from visiting the holy sites in the Old City and the Hadassah Medical Center in West Jerusalem.

He did, however, attend a working lunch with Premier Shimon Peres, and called at the Knesset where he laid a wreath at the Memorial for Fallen Soldiers and listened to the plenary proceedings.

Speaker Shlomo Hillel, who is a former Israel Ambassador to several African states, praised the guest for his courage in being the first among African countries to reestablish ties with Israel after most of them broke relations in 1973. Mobutu reestablished an Embassy here two years ago.

At a meeting with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir today, Mobutu said the question was not whether other African states would follow in the footsteps of Zaire (and Liberia) in reestablishing diplomatic ties with Israel -- but when.

In reply to the President's queries regarding how best Israel could aid Zaire, Shamir suggested a medical center in a provincial town, to be funded by the United States' Agency for International Development and staffed by Israeli medical personnel. Israeli sources said Mobutu had responded enthusiastically to that idea.

The visiting leader also met with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, apparently to discuss the military training aid relationship between the two countries. Rabin declined to tell waiting reporters the details of their conversation. He noted, though, that back in the 1960's, as Deputy Chief of Staff of the IDF, he had played a key role in forging the first links with Zaire.

At that time, Mobutu underwent paratroop training in Israel. He plans during this visit to call at the training ground where he won his coveted IDF red beret and silver paratroop wings.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE JEWS OF BRAZIL

By Milton Jacoby

SAO PAULO, May 14 (JTA) -- The death of President-elect Tancredo Neves on April 21 has had a sweeping impact on the 120,000 Jews of Brazil, a land blessed with enormous physical resources, yet beset by serious economic and government problems.

The day after Neves was interred to the accompaniment of scenes of mass hysteria resulting in death and injury to many, the Jewish community of Rio de Janeiro met at Temple A.R.I. to honor the memory of a leader it had held in high esteem as a friend and supporter. Similar tributes were held in Sao Paulo and in other cities.

A common theme of these observances was a sense of personal loss, for Neves had been regarded as a champion of Brazilian Jewry and sympathetic to Israel. Just one week prior to his election, he had conferred with Jewish officials and pledged that, as President, he would initiate a closer rapport between the government and its Jewish constituency, including warmer relations with Israel.

A Negligible Political Force

At present, there are only two Jews serving in the Federal Parliament, but in 1986, in the next general elections for state and municipal legislatures, several Jewish candidates will be put forward, according to Benne Milnitsky, head of the Confederation of Brazilian Jews.

A leading Sao Paulo lawyer who labors long and hard to strengthen the 60,000-member Jewish community here, plus the other 60,000 Jews in the rest of the country, Milnitsky deplors Brazilian Jewry's lack of interest in politics, and is determined to weld them into a potent voting force to ensure the election of more Jews. He observed, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, that in contrast to the poor showing of Jews in government positions, the Brazilians of Lebanese extraction are extremely well represented in Parliament and in other legislative bodies.

Considerable Power In Economic Sphere

If Jews wield little political influence, they exert considerable power in economic matters, especially in thriving Sao Paulo, the heart of the nation and larger than New York City. Rabbi Henry Sobel of Temple Beth El, the largest synagogue in South America, spoke of Jews as belonging to the "economic aristocracy" of his city. He pointed to Leon Feffer, one of the richest men in the country as a model of responsible leadership in business circles and as "a Jew of the highest order."

The owner of the largest pulp and paper complex in Brazil, and of vast forests in the interior, Feffer is a pioneer in Jewish education, having introduced courses in Hebrew and the Talmud in six universities, two of them Catholic.

He arrived in Sao Paulo from the Ukraine in 1921, and was president of the largest Jewish school for 24 years. Feffer is also the founder and president of the University Association for Judaic Culture. Now a vigorous 83, he speaks with boyish fervor of his life-long mission to bring to his adopted land the fruits of his Jewish heritage.

His rabbi, Henry Sobel, is considered "the voice of the community. Young and handsome, with curly blond hair cascading down his neck, the U.S.-born

rabbi speaks via radio and television, with more frequency than any other Jewish leader, articulating the views of Brazilian Jewry for the general public.

He is seen regularly on the commercially-sponsored "Mosaico" which has been on the air for 24 years. Its lively format includes news of Israel and local affairs, song and dance sequences and an "Ask the Rabbi" segment in which the photogenic Sobel responds to all manner of questions; and its audience is primarily non-Jewish.

Extraordinary Interest In Judaism

The rabbi speaks often of "abertura," or the opening up of progressive ideas and practices after 20 years of military rule, and of his own efforts to encourage the Jewish leadership to work more closely with powerful Catholic and Protestant forces, who also appear receptive to the new wave of liberalism sweeping Brazil. The interest of these churches in the Talmud and Judaism is extraordinary.

A Portuguese translation of the Mishnah, published in Brazil some years ago in an edition of 10,000 copies was sold out in short order, with 95 percent of the sales made to non-Jews. Courses in Hebrew and the Old Testament are regularly taught in Catholic colleges. Five out of six students taking a Hebrew course at the University of Rio presently, are not Jewish.

Alberto Dines, an outstanding writer and editor, on the contrary is not too sanguine about the future of the Jewish community. His view is that the quality of leadership has declined, together with a loss of idealism and that no younger men of stature have appeared who promise new directions for Brazilian Jewry. Dines has been a frequent contributor to "Shalom," a monthly in Portuguese devoted to cultural affairs, which has a largely non-Jewish readership, including journalists and politicians.

Pride And Anxiety

The Jews of Sao Paulo are justifiably proud of their 30 synagogues, and of Hebraica, their vast and imposing club, containing indoor and outdoor pools, acres of tennis courts, theaters, restaurants, and a mammoth sports complex where more than 10,000 Jews gather on a Sunday. Their old-age home is one of the finest in the world, comprising eight buildings (some 10 stories high), in a country-club setting.

Yet, problems besetting Jewish communities the world over, are very much in evidence. Assimilation may affect more than 30,000 Jews. Anti-Semitism is ever present, but beneath the surface; it is not overt and certainly not official, for government leaders frequently attend Jewish observances.

Attendance in Jewish day schools is on the decline, with an enrollment of only 20 percent of Jewish youth in Sao Paulo, and less than 50 percent in Rio. Yiddish as a language and culture is espoused by a steadily diminishing band of zealots. The Yiddish Presse with David Marcus as its editor, used to be published weekly in Rio, but in recent years, with much less frequency.

The American Jewish visitor to this fascinating land will still have much to see and enjoy beside the sheer monumental beauty of a country larger than his own. He can be sure of a warm and unforgettable reception by his fellow Jews in Rio and Sao Paulo.

This observer, after two recent visits, can report on the basis of talks with many Brazilians representing varied facets of the community, that the Jews of Brazil are, in some respects, the victims of their material success. Concomitant with their enjoyment of the good life, may be the need to re-explore their Judaic faith and to discover a meaningful self-identity.