

PERES: UNITY GOVERNMENT COULD BE JEOPARDIZED UNLESS DECISIVE ACTION IS TAKEN ON A NUMBER OF VITAL ISSUES
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 19 (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres told the Knesset Security and Foreign Affairs Committee today that the existence of the national unity government could be in jeopardy if the government fails to take decisive action on several issues.

This was Peres' first expression raising doubts as to the survivability of the unity government. In recent weeks, several ministers and other leaders of the Labor Party raised similar doubts, but Peres remained quiet on the issue.

His remarks today came amid growing tension between the Labor and Likud parties especially on such issues as the Taba dispute with Egypt; the current attempts to expand the Jewish presence in the Arab quarter of Hebron; relations with Egypt; and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation proposed for talks with the United States.

Warns Another War Could Erupt

Peres issued a stern warning to the Knesset committee that another round in the Arab-Israeli war could break out if the peace process continues without reaching some conclusion. "If the Arab world realizes within a given period of time that there are no prospects for a settlement," Peres said, "a new war oriented Arab coalition may be formed, a result of Arab despair. We must prevent such a coalition, we must prevent the phenomena of despair and disappointment."

According to Peres, this also applies to Egypt. He said that all Israelis — regardless of their political leanings — will regret the failure of improving relations with Egypt. It was in this context that Peres warned that a political freeze might put in question the existence of the national unity government.

Quotes Report By Murphy On The PLO

Peres, meanwhile, quoted a report by Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who said that Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat was willing to accept United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which could be interpreted as an indirect readiness to put an end to terrorist attacks against Israel.

But, Peres added, the PLO was not ready to undertake an explicit commitment to put an end to its terrorist activities. Moreover, he said that the PLO and its leaders are constantly occupying themselves with terror. "The purpose of the PLO today is to shatter the myth of stability in Israel," Peres said.

On the other hand, Peres saw a significant change in the position of King Hussein of Jordan. He said the Jordanian King was now ready for negotiations although results were not promised as a precondition to negotiations.

Murphy was here for meetings last Thursday with Peres and other senior Israeli officials. Murphy said he did not meet with Palestinians while in Amman, according to Israeli sources. He did meet with King Hussein of Jordan and also Egyptian officials during his tour last week of the Mideast.

MURPHY'S FAILURE TO MEET WITH JOINT DELEGATION BLAMED ON HUSSEIN'S DEMAND FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO NEGOTIATE A MIDEAST PEACE AGREEMENT
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19 (JTA) — The refusal of King Hussein of Jordan to drop his demand for an international conference to negotiate a Middle East peace agreement is being blamed here for Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy's failure to agree on a meeting with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

Murphy, who heads the State Department's Near Eastern and South Asian Bureau, returns to Washington tomorrow after six days in the Mideast where he met with leaders of Jordan, Israel and Egypt. He is scheduled to report to President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz, both vacationing in California, according to State Department deputy spokesman Charles Redman.

While Redman did not place the onus directly on Jordan, he was implicit in his comment. "The main point we have stressed continually is that the meeting with this group (the joint delegation) must be a step in the process which leads to our ultimate goal which is direct negotiations between all the parties," Redman said.

No Final Decision On The List

He said that there has been "no final decision" on the list submitted by Hussein to Washington of Palestinians for U.S. approval as the Palestinian representatives on the joint delegation. But Redman stressed that the problem now is "less a question of the list" and more of how a meeting by the U.S. with the joint delegation would "advance" the process "to our ultimate goal of direct negotiations" between Israel and Jordan and the Palestinians.

The U.S. has indicated that if Washington's conditions are met it would meet with the joint delegation even though Israel objects to the meeting as an unnecessary step before direct negotiations and fears that it may lead to a U.S. recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Shultz, in a message to Israeli Premier Shimon Peres last week, sought to reassure Israel, stressing that the U.S. will not consider the meeting as a dialogue with the PLO. However, PLO spokesmen have said that they would view U.S. agreement to meet with the joint delegation as a first step toward U.S. recognition of the PLO. Most of the seven Palestinians on the list, which was drawn up by PLO leader Yasir Arafat, are members of the PLO.

Murphy did not meet with any Palestinians during his latest visit to the Mideast, Redman said.

Meanwhile, Redman said that "deliberations are continuing" within the Administration on arms requests from Jordan and Saudi. He said Congress will be consulted on the final decision. However, a majority in the House and Senate are opposed to any such arms sales unless Jordan agrees to direct negotiations with Israel.

LABOR AND LIKUD TRADE CHARGES OVER SQUATTERS IN HEBRON APARTMENT

JERUSALEM, Aug. 19 (JTA) — The continuing

takeover of an apartment in the Arab marketplace in Hebron by six Likud Knesset members has created friction between Labor and Likud in the coalition government and has led to a series of charges and counter-charges by the two sides.

Premier Shimon Peres said today that the takeover by the MKs, headed by Guelia Cohen of the Tehiya Party, who began the action last week after a group of nearby Kiryat Arba settlers took over the apartment and were twice ousted by Israeli security forces, was an effort to outdo other extremist parties in appealing to extremist sentiments in Israel. But spokespeople for Tehiya and the Likud contended, at the same time, that the squatters were exercising the legitimate right of Jews to settle anywhere in Eretz Yisrael.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited Hebron today in a fruitless effort to convince the MKs to leave the apartment which they claim Jews from Hebron had bought from an Arab owner last week following the stabbing of Yaacov Reiter, 45, of Kiryat Arba as he was walking through the marketplace. The Israeli army has not been able to remove the MKs from the apartment because of parliamentary immunity.

Rabin told the Tehiya MKs -- Eliezer Waldman, Gershon Shafat, and Cohen -- with whom he met at the local military government headquarters that they had to leave in view of yesterday's Inner Cabinet rejection of efforts by Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir to uphold plans by squatters to continue to occupy the apartment. The Inner Cabinet split 5-5 along political lines in its vote.

While Rabin was meeting with the MKs, Knesset Speaker Shlomo Hillel sent his deputy, Aharon Nahmias, to persuade the MKs that the site for their campaign was in the Knesset and not in an apartment in the Arab marketplace in Hebron where their presence was controversial.

Later today, Likud MK Dov Shilansky joined the squatters in the apartment, as an indication that the rightwing elements in the government did not regard yesterday's Inner Cabinet's decision as the final word on the matter. The MKs appeared today to be challenging the defense establishment and waiting to see if it would use force to evict them.

View Of Legal Experts

According to legal experts, the MKs' freedom of movement granted to them inside the "green line" did not apply in the administered territories since these are not part of the State of Israel. But Likud MK Michael Eitan, who spent the weekend in the apartment with the squatters, said he did not accept this interpretation of the law. He contended that the Supreme Court recently recognized Knesset members' privilege to move around freely everywhere -- including the administered territories.

The issue of the squatters was raised by Peres at today's session of the Knesset Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. He sharply criticized the presence of the MKs in Hebron and pointedly noted that their action will not save the State of Israel. "I am saying to the Likud, whether you like it or not, that the government is the body that makes decisions."

Referring to the squatters claim that the apartment they are occupying was bought legally from an Arab, Peres recalled that the previous Likud government decided that there would be no real estate purchases without the approval of the Defense Ministry. "One

cannot mock the law and the government, by conspiracy with Arabs," Peres declared, in reference to the Arab who reportedly sold the apartment.

Meanwhile, in another development, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, one of the leaders of the Jewish quarter in Hebron, and three other local Jewish leaders were charged with violating the public order. The charges were made by the army following a disturbance today in the Hebron marketplace where several vegetable stands were overturned by the four men when the army prevented Levinger from shopping there.

IDF OFFICER ACQUITTED OF CHARGES OF USING EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE IN QUESTIONING TWO ARAB TERRORISTS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 19 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force's chief infantry and paratroop officer, Brig. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, was yesterday acquitted of charges of improper conduct and excessive violence in the interrogation of two terrorists captured during the freeing of a bus they had hijacked and whose passengers they held hostage over a year ago.

A one-man disciplinary inquiry commission reported that it accepted Mordechai's explanations that it had been urgently necessary to take exceptional measures to obtain "real time" information to ascertain the whereabouts of a reported explosive charge left aboard the bus when they were removed.

Two of the four terrorists who took over the bus were killed when it was stormed by a crack Army unit commanded by Mordechai near Ashdod, on its way toward the Egyptian border. The other two were seen being led away from the bus, to a nearby investigation center set up in a tent.

Mordechai had admitted that he had pistol-whipped the two terrorists. But two earlier investigation commissions -- one civilian and one military -- had found that they had actually died as a result of blows on their skulls from rifle butts during the storming of the bus, to stun them and prevent their further shooting.

The earlier commissions reports had been submitted to the Attorney General. They said that Mordechai could not be held responsible for the actual deaths of the two, but suggested that further investigations should be held into suspicions of his improper conduct and the use of excessive force.

Findings Show Use Of 'Reasonable Force'

The Attorney General, Yitzhak Zamir, handed the reports over to the IDF's Judge Advocate-General but denied reports that he suggested Mordechai should be put on trial. IDF reserve Maj. Gen. Chaim Nadel was subsequently appointed as a one-man disciplinary board and investigated the evidence. He questioned Mordechai last Friday. His report was published by the IDF spokesman yesterday.

According to his findings, Mordechai had used "reasonable force" to obtain "vital and immediate information" and to prevent danger to other people. He was acting during the first few minutes of the terrorists' interrogation after their capture, trying to discover what had happened to a grenade and booby-trapped suitcase which had been in their possession on the bus, the inquiry found.

A grass-roots movement for Mordechai's release of any suspicions had grown in recent days. Even politicians who have protested against excessive violence welcomed the acquittal verdict, saying that the year-long inquiry had publicized many "mysteries"

and these had finally been disproved by the disciplinary court. Mordechai had been in line for promotion for some time, but this had been postponed until the end of the investigations. His promotion to the rank of Maj. Gen. is now expected within days, and Mordechai will be in line for promotion to a senior IDF post.

The Army and the police must now decide how to act with reference to the other soldiers and policemen involved in the incident, against whom the earlier commissions had proposed disciplinary action.

ALFONSIN PLEDGES HIS GOVERNMENT WILL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN THE LAW AGAINST ALL FORMS OF BIAS

BUENOS AIRES, Aug. 19 (JTA) — Speaking before 1,400 representatives at the B'nai B'rith District 20 (South America) convention, Argentina's President Raul Alfonsin electrified the audience when he pledged that his government would introduce legislation to strengthen the law against "racial, religious, ethnic and sexual discrimination." He noted that the battle against discrimination was a "preoccupation of his government."

After participating in a menorah lighting ceremony at the opening of a convention of international leadership of B'nai B'rith and delegates from seven Latin American countries, as well as diplomats and a broad spectrum of Argentine political dignitaries, Alfonsin described in detail the significance and contributions of the Jewish community.

Calling for the total involvement of all sectors of the society to assure the development and the continuation of the democratic systems, he declared:

"While in a substantial part of South America the winds of democracy are sweeping away the remnants of authoritarianism, we must reaffirm the validity of solidarity and equality among all men. The worst enemy of democracy is the persistence within society of individual or group selfishness, of prejudice and dogmatism. In our country, that terrible social illness, anti-Semitism, never took hold of the people."

Calls For Action In Three Arenas

Noting that democracy is a difficult system requiring a great deal of self-sacrifice and discipline, B'nai B'rith International president Gerald Kraft said:

"We believe that developed democracies have a special responsibility to enhance the development of new democratic governments that re-emerge. In a world threatened by totalitarian regimes, we believe well-established democracies must find significant ways to support and strengthen new democracies with the same vigor as they oppose totalitarianism."

Kraft called on re-emerging democracies to exhibit their solidarity with the struggle against those who are intent on the destruction of democratic values by acting in the following three arenas: the United Nations, Soviet Jewry and relations with Israel.

OLON SAYS U.S. PLANS TO INCREASE ITS AID TO ISRAEL FROM LAST YEAR'S \$2.6 BILLION TO \$4.5 BILLION

By Marlene Goldman

NEW YORK, Aug. 19 (JTA) — A Washington legislator said here last night that in order for Israel to exist, it is "vital that the assistance of the U.S. be increased for the next fiscal year." Sen. Arlen Specter (R. Pa.), addressing some 3,000 delegates

attending the 71st annual national convention of Hadassah, which is also marking its 73rd anniversary, stated that the U.S. plans to raise its aid to Israel from last year's \$2.6 billion to \$4.5 billion.

"As long as we possess a good set of lungs, sturdy legs, and the capacity to fight," the U.S. will make sure that Israel is secure, Specter said. At the same time, he stated, it is "vital the U.S. not sell arms to Arab nations."

Specter, a member of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, said that Israel's allies in Congress will attempt to block further sales of U.S. arms to Israel's Arab neighbors, and added that Arab nations hostile to Israel must accept the ties between that nation and the U.S. as a prerequisite to establishing better relations with the United States.

"Peace will never be achieved at the expense of Israel," Specter said, and he added that "in the pursuit of peace the United States and Israel are inextricably bound." The Senator declared that there is "no difference between supporting U.S. interests and Israeli interests," noting that the "sister nation of Israel is dedicated to democracy and the same values as the U.S."

Israel Won't Accept Terms Dictated By Others

Addressing the same session, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Meir Rosenne, affirmed that "no Israeli government will accept" the Palestine Liberation Organization as part of a Middle East negotiating team and emphasized that Israel would not be influenced by its allies in reaching an agreement with its Arab neighbors.

"No government of Israel will ever accept terms dictated by another," Rosenne told the delegates at the Convention, "because a dictated peace is the beginning of war."

The Ambassador said Israel was "reassured" by the U.S. government's statements that it will not conduct formal talks with the PLO or representatives designated by the PLO.

Rosenne said that American Jews, in their hope for Mideast peace, should keep faith, determination and love for Israel; keep ties with Israel and world Jewry; and maintain solidarity with the Jewish people.

"Israel will remain the nicest monument to world Jewry and will enable us to transfer this wonderful legacy from past generations to future ones," he said.

The Ambassador stated that "In this world where Israel is condemned by the United Nations, and accused of all the evils of the world" there is something to be proud of: We (Israel) are still there in spite of everything ..."

Commenting on the recently concluded UN's End of the Decade Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, Rosenne hailed the deletion of the infamous Zionism equals racism statement in the final document. He said the deletion was a success that merits recognition.

This year's theme of the Hadassah convention, "I Lift My Lamp" — from the Emma Lazarus poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty — hailed Hadassah as a symbol of freedom.

The convention, which ends Wednesday, is designed, according to national convention chairperson Blanche Shukow, "to review Hadassah's history ... assess its present ... and appraise its future ..."

Ruth Popkin, Hadassah's national president, read a message from President Chaim Herzog of Israel, urging that Hadassah members "recall the close links of understanding you have forged with Israel."

SPECIAL INTERVIEW **A MAN NAMED VRBA** By Maurice Samuelson

VANCOUVER, Aug. 19 (JTA) -- The man who escaped from the Auschwitz concentration camp with the first wartime report about its top secret extermination machinery has taken up the cudgels against modern Nazis who claim the Holocaust never occurred and call the final solution a Zionist fraud to extort money from post-Hitler Germany.

He is Dr. Rudolf Vrba, professor of pharmacology at the University of British Columbia. He is still only 61 and has the same head of bushy black hair as in April, 1944 when he got out of Auschwitz with another young Slovak Jew, Alfred Wetzler.

Their aim was not merely to stay alive but to warn the world of the horrible fate being prepared at Auschwitz for the one million Jews of Hungary who, only weeks earlier, had fallen into German hands.

Last January, Vrba emerged from his university campus as the star prosecution witness in the Toronto trial of Ernst Zundel, publisher and distributor of wildly anti-Semitic tracts dismissing the Holocaust as a Jewish hoax and claiming nobody had ever seen Jews being gassed.

Role In The Zundel Trial

A previous witness, eminent Holocaust authority Dr. Raul Hilberg, had been rattled by Zundel's counsel's efforts to exploit historians' inconsistencies about the details of the Nazi extermination program, including the number of its victims.

Vrba's strident clashes with Zundel's lawyer were the turning point in the trial which ended with the defendant being jailed for 15 months and barred from publicly discussing the Holocaust. Since Zundel, 46, lacks Canadian citizenship despite living there for 28 years, he is liable to deportation to his native Germany should he fail to win an appeal against the sentence.

Interviewed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency at his Vancouver laboratories, Vrba admitted that at the end of the war it would never have occurred to him that 40 years later he would again have to vouch for the veracity about his encyclopaedic report on Auschwitz and still less "that I would find myself being cross-examined about it by Nazis."

Embittered By Wartime Zionist Leaders

To this day he remains deeply wounded and embittered by the reluctance of the wartime Zionist leaders in Hungary to publicize his report immediately lest it imperil their vain efforts to buy some lives from Adolf Eichmann.

Vrba speaks freely of the "treason" of the Zionist leaders of those days, even extending the charge to Dr. Chaim Weizmann himself. Prompt publication of the Vrba-Wetzler report, he insists, would have guaranteed that 400,000 Hungarian Jews would not have gone so meekly to the death camps believing they were going to be re-settled for the duration of the war.

Forty years later, this independent and courageous scientist is critical of the Canadian Jewish establishment for its nervous reluctance to bring Zundel to trial. (The charges had to be pressed by the independent Holocaust Remembrance Association, headed by Sabina Citron, an Auschwitz survivor.)

"From experience we know that by pretending the Nazis do not exist we will not make them disappear. Instead, they will just be able to behave more uninhibitedly," Vrba says.

Although widely reported in Canada, the case has received hardly any attention elsewhere, even though Zundel claims to distribute his anti-Jewish hate material throughout 45 countries in 14 languages.

Vrba Thwarted Neo-Nazis' Plans

Vrba, who was called to testify by the Ontario provincial attorney, feels personally responsible for the outcome of such cases because of his co-authorship of the seminal report about Auschwitz in the spring of 1944. His feeling is reciprocated by the neo-Nazi historians, intent on dismissing the Holocaust as a Zionist myth and therefore implying that Vrba had knowingly fabricated his account of Auschwitz.

"I follow neo-Nazi literature closely and I know that for years they have been recording every word I have written. It was therefore their dream to put me in the dock as the accused," he says.

In the Zundel case, their dream had finally come true but thanks to Vrba's powerful impact on the court their plans had backfired.

From Czechoslovakia To Canada

After compiling his Auschwitz report, Vrba served with distinction in Czechoslovakia's Uher partisan unit. Graduating after the war as a chemist at Prague University, he embarked on a scientific career.

In 1958, he left Czechoslovakia, spent two years in Israel and another seven at the British Medical Research Institute where he gained British nationality. He then moved to North America and has lived in Vancouver for the past 10 years, devoting his days to science, lecturing on the Holocaust, art, literature and hiking in the mountains.

Meanwhile, Vrba's mother, now 90 years old, still lives in her family home in Czechoslovakia. Vrba also has a sister who lives in Montreal, but two of their brothers died in the war.

Wetzler, the man who escaped with Vrba from Auschwitz, also still lives in Czechoslovakia. Six years older than Vrba, he recently retired from his job as editor of a small, humorous magazine.

FORMER POC ARRIVES IN ISRAEL

TEL AVIV, Aug. 19 (JTA) -- Prisoner of Conscience Yitzhak Shkolnik arrived in Israel from the Soviet Union via Vienna last night and was met at the Ben Gurion Airport by his wife Feiga and his 18-year-old daughter Lousa, whom he had not seen for 13 years.

He said he thought his sudden permission to leave the USSR, after years of continual refusals, may have been due to the appointment of a new Foreign Minister in Moscow.

Shkolnik was first charged in 1972 on charges of espionage for Britain, as he worked as an engineer in a Ukraine factory at which British engineers were also employed. When the courts found there was insufficient evidence against him, he was charged with spying for the Americans, but again with insufficient proof to sentence him. He was therefore charged with spying for Israel and for teaching Hebrew, for which he was given a seven-year prison sentence.