

### THE HERUT PARTY CONVENTION SELF-DESTRUCTS IN PANDEMONIUM AND VIOLENCE; NO NEW CHAIRMAN NAMED By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) — The 15th Herut convention did not adjourn. It disintegrated before dawn Thursday in deadlock, pandemonium and violence without naming a new party chairman.

That failure itself was tantamount to rejection of the leadership of Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, and put in doubt his ability to govern when Laborite Shimon Peres hands over the office of Premier next October under the Labor-Likud unity coalition agreement.

The convention was deeply riven by bitter factional and personal feuding from the moment it convened Monday morning in a hall on the Tel Aviv fair-grounds, following a festive opening in Jerusalem Sunday night.

During the four days that followed, Shamir and his close associate Minister-Without-Portfolio Moshe Arens, were fiercely opposed by an alliance of supporters of Ariel Sharon, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and David Levy, Minister of Housing. The Moroccan-born Levy, in particular, commanded enthusiastic support from the rank-and-file delegates, mainly Sephardic Jews from depressed urban areas and development towns.

#### Shamir Told To Get Out

There were fisticuffs on the opening day and defamatory rhetoric by both sides. But nothing compared to the blows and curses exchanged early Thursday as the convention simply self-destructed. The 2,000 delegates left in anger without a modicum of unity or good-will to show for their labors. Shamir had to be escorted out of the hall by security guards as young Sephardic delegates, apparently supporters of Levy, taunted him with chants, "Go home, old man."

Later Thursday there were tentative contacts involving Herut Secretariat chairman Yoram Aridor in an effort to mediate between the rival camps. Herut circles hoped the convention could be reconvened in a week or two, after passions have calmed, to complete its work.

The four leading figures—Shamir, Arens, Levy and Sharon — each addressed the stormy plenary Wednesday night. They barred no holds in denouncing each other and defending their own camps. If anything, their speeches only deepened the divisions within the party.

On the podium, and in live television interviews later, Shamir and Levy continued to ventilate the profound mistrust each holds for the other. Shamir backed off somewhat from his denunciation of his rivals Wednesday morning as "a gang of criminals" trying to "hijack our movement by force." But he made clear to the delegates and the viewing public his opinion that Levy and Sharon lacked the "honesty, decency, loyalty and high standards" which he wants passed on to the next generation of Herut.

In a pre-dawn press conference, Shamir accused Sharon of lying during behind-the-scenes efforts to reach an agreement that might have salvaged the convention. Levy, for his part, repeated his charge that Shamir was bending the democratic process in order to ignore what Levy maintained is the plain fact that his rivals had amassed a majority within the party at the grass-roots level and at the convention.

### RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONCERNED ABOUT DANGERS POSED BY EXTREMISTS SEEKING TO RECRUIT IN FARM AREAS By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, March 13 (JTA) — Religious leaders representing northern Kentucky and southern Ohio gathered at the Isaac Wise Center in Cincinnati last week to discuss the plight of the American farmer and the threat posed by extremist groups seeking recruits in the depressed farm areas.

The all-day conference, "The Rural Crisis: A Rural-Urban Dialogue," was attended by some 75 Catholic, Methodist and Episcopal clerical leaders, and also by local Jewish officials, according to Jonathan Levine, the American Jewish Committee's regional representative in Chicago, who attended the meeting.

The AJC initiated the conference and sponsored it in coordination with the Catholic Diocese of southern Ohio and northern Kentucky, the United Methodist Church of Ohio and the Episcopal Diocese of southern Ohio, according to Levine.

It was designed, Levine explained, to bring urban and rural leaders together to discuss the farm crisis in the region, to educate the Jewish community on the issue, and to "inform the Christian and other religious leaders about our concern of the potential of anti-Semitic organizing groups."

#### Increasing Concern In Jewish Community

Conference participants were provided with a screening of the ABC-News "20/20" segment "Seeds of Hate," broadcast nationally last August, which brought to public attention the activities of extremist groups in the Farm Belt. Though the program was criticized by some groups, including the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, because it was considered too sensational and alarmist in its presentation, it nevertheless generated increased activism by American Jewry to meet the challenges posed by the extremist groups.

The concern was highlighted when, last month, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the coordinating body of community relations policies, urged its 113 local and 11 national constituent agencies to direct more attention to the plight of American farmers and support various efforts aimed at easing their situation.

But extremist groups such as the Posse Comitatus, the Christian Patriots Defense League, the Populist Party and other extremist and paramilitary groups have sought to capitalize on farmers' problems and are actively seeking recruits in the Midwest.

But to what extent these groups have succeeded in their efforts has become the subject of some dispute.

The ADL issued a report last week based on a Harris Poll conducted last January of 606 rural residents in Nebraska and Iowa. It concluded that reports of growing anti-Semitism in the Farm Belt have been "grossly exaggerated," and that far-right groups have "failed in their mission" to recruit farmers to their cause. Nathan Perlmutter, ADL executive director, pointed out in the report that "even a little bit of bigotry is far too much."

But two AJCommittee officials -- Levine and Rabbi James Rudin, AJC interreligious affairs director -- suggested that claims of extremist support in the Farm Belt have not been exaggerated and that the Harris Poll's findings indicated that thousands of persons have attended meetings of extremist groups or are actively associated with the movement.

All those Jewish community officials contacted in the past months by the JTA have unequivocally asserted that the overwhelming majority of farmers in the Midwest have not taken to active support or involvement in extremist organizations.

More than two months ago, the ADL issued an 11-page background report on the American farmer and the extremists. It said the "overwhelming majority of farmers have not swallowed the extremist message" -- but there is a potential danger to American society when "violence is threatened as a tactic" and radicalism and bigotry are propagated.

Furthermore, the Omaha World Herald last week quoted officials of the FBI office in Omaha and the Nebraska State Patrol in Lincoln as saying the Harris Poll survey was consistent with their assessment of the strength of far-right movements in the two states. But both law enforcement officials indicated that a small number of extremists can do enormous harm.

Levine told the JTA that religious leaders at the Cincinnati conference indicated that extremist group activity in southern Ohio and northern Kentucky is not a serious problem at this time. He expressed concern, however, about the potential future growth of extremist groups in the region unless the situation of the farmer is eased.

#### Ways To Combat Extremist Groups

Levine said there were some "real-nuts-and-bolts" discussions among the conference participants on ways to combat extremist groups. These included, Levine said, increased outreach to farmers and their families, developments of interreligious groups to aid distressed farmers and "getting local religious leaders to speak out against these extremist groups."

"One of the ways that the Jewish community can help respond to problems of extremism, I believe, is to offer responses to the rural crisis itself," said Levine. "If we as Jews get out there and offer what help we can even if it is simply advice, we are going to go a long way to neutralizing extremist efforts. It's going to show that Jews care about their neighbors and that Jews take this rural crisis seriously."

#### ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN TALKS EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE BY END OF THE MONTH By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) -- The Israeli and Egyptian teams negotiating over arbitration of the Taba border dispute and normalization of relations are expected to complete their work by the end of the month. The latest round of talks concluded at Herzliya Thursday. A new round will be held in Cairo next week.

Avraham Tamir, Director General of the Prime Minister's Office who is co-chairman of the Israeli delegation, and Nabil Al Arabi, head of the Egyptian delegation, agreed that some progress had been made but the main problems remain unresolved. One of them is the wording of guidelines that will instruct the arbitration panel on Taba and composition of the panel itself.

Tamir said the negotiations will be concluded within the next two weeks, with or without a comprehensive agreement. In case there is no agreement the delegation heads will conclude that no further progress is possible at the working level and will refer the unresolved matters back to the political echelons of both countries.

The Israeli delegation informed the Egyptians Thursday that Israel has approved the expansion of the Coptic college in Jerusalem. The Copts are members of the ancient Monophysite Christian church in Egypt. Israel also decided to hand over the long term dispute between the Egyptian and Ethiopian churches over the Deir Sultan monastery in East Jerusalem to a ministerial committee.

#### RIFT BETWEEN LABOR AND LIKUD OVER FUTURE OF ADMINISTERED TERRITORIES

TEL AVIV, March 13 (JTA) -- The deep division between the partners in the Labor-Likud unity coalition government over the future of the administered territories was emphasized at a Haifa University symposium at which American diplomats also expressed their views.

The closing session Wednesday was addressed by Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The topic was a third state between Israel and Jordan. Rabin -- who stressed that he was advancing his own opinions, which he admitted had little chance of acceptance by the present coalition -- warned that it would be a major mistake to attempt to impose Israeli sovereignty over the territories.

It would block the hope for peace and create a binational state with a permanent Palestinian problem which would destroy Israel's character as a democratic Jewish State, he said.

Those arguments were dismissed by Eliahu Ben-Elissar of Herut and Yehuda Ben-Meir of the National Religious Party, who insisted on full Jewish sovereignty over the entire West Bank.

But Yitzhak Unna, former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, warned that Israel, by remaining in the administered territories, was bringing upon its society many of the problems of which South Africa is trying to rid itself.

Harold Saunders, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, a participant in the symposium, said the only way to test the positions of the Palestine Liberation Organization was to negotiate with it. "Both you (Israelis) and we have talked to them when we needed to," he said. He stressed that the U.S. had no difficulty talking about self-determination for the Palestinians, even though it is hedged by realities on the ground. Saunders said an eventual solution would have to involve elements of confederation, with political expression for the Palestinians.

Rabin proposed an interim solution under an umbrella of cooperation between Israel, Jordan and moderate Palestinians, who would share responsibility for the territories. He warned that attempts to achieve an ultimate solution for the complex problem of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would only result in stalemate, create new tensions, possible war or an imposed settlement. There are no shortcuts to advance the peace process, he said.

## BUSH URGES JEWISH SUPPORT FOR CONTRAS

WASHINGTON, March 13 (JTA) — Vice President George Bush urged some 200 Orthodox Jewish leaders Wednesday to support the Administration's request for Congressional approval of some \$100 million in aid to the Contra rebel forces fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Bush asserted that the Sandinista government is a Marxist-Leninist regime bent on destroying religious freedom, and cited what he termed the "Nazi-like tactics" used by the Sandinistas in harassing the small Jewish community in Managua and the desecration of the Managua synagogue.

Bush's remarks to participants in a National Leadership Mission under the aegis of the Agudath Israel of America, was the second attempt by the Administration to rally American Jewish community support for the Contra aid program, which is meeting stiff Congressional opposition.

President Reagan last week told a meeting here of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that American Jews should support the Contra aid package. The President sought to link events in Central America to American ability to support Israel when he declared: "Our supply lines to Israel and NATO run through the Caribbean."

### Cites Threats Against Jews

Bush, in his remarks Wednesday, quoted a Sandinista official as saying, "We say to our brother Arafat that Nicaragua is his land and that the PLO is the cause of the Sandinistas." He also referred to threats made against Jews in the Nicaraguan capital that "what Hitler started, we will finish," and asserted that while Nicaragua's Jewish community is small, its fate "gives a picture of what is at stake" in the conflict in the Central American region.

Bush also reiterated the Administration's position in placing human rights at the top of its agenda with the Soviet Union, its priority assignment to the war on international terrorism, and its refusal to talk with the PLO until it recognizes Israel's right to exist and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. He also expressed gratitude to Agudath Israel's support for the Administration's policy of favoring tuition tax credits for students in the non-public schools.

The Agudath Israel delegation was also briefed on Administration policies by Secretary of Education William Bennett, Attorney General Edwin Meese, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Samuel Pierce, and on other topics by a dozen key Congressional members, including Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole.

### SHULTZ SAYS SAUDI ARABIA HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 13 (JTA) — Secretary of State George Shultz maintained Thursday that Saudi Arabia has been helpful in the Middle East peace process, but would not say publicly what the Saudis have done.

"I believe the Saudis have contributed significantly to the peace process," Shultz said in testifying before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations.

When Sen. Arlen Specter (R. Pa.), who raised the question in view of the Reagan Administration's proposal to sell the Saudis \$354 million in missiles, asked for an example, Shultz said he could not do so publicly. "Mostly what the Saudis do they do as quietly as they can," the Secretary explained. "That is their way of doing things."

But Specter said any contributions by the Saudis have been "inaudible" to him. He noted that during the debate over the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, President Reagan promised that "if the Saudis did not become involved in the Mideastern peace process that the plug will be pulled on the delivery of the AWACS." Delivery is scheduled to begin later this year.

Shultz agreed that this pledge had been made. But he stressed, "The earlier sale and this (sale) is not linked primarily to the peace process. It's linked to our strategic interests in the (Persian Gulf) and what happens in the Gulf." Shultz maintained that "the ability of Saudi Arabia to assert itself in the Gulf has stood us in good stead" and the proposed arms sale will help contribute to the "stability" of the region.

The proposed arms sale would provide the Saudis with 1,666 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, 200 Stinger shoulder-fired ground-to-air missile systems and 600 replacement missiles and 100 Harpoon sea-to-sea missiles.

### Shultz Defends Sale Of Missiles

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R. NY) suggested that the Saudis don't need the Stingers since the Iranians have only about 60 planes and the Saudis now have an adequate air defense system that could meet any threat from the Iranians.

Shultz replied that the Stingers can be used against the helicopters. He stressed that the proposed sale does not provide the Saudis with new weapons but ensures their having an adequate stock of existing weapons. Shultz told Sen. Daniel Inouye (D. Hawaii) the sale is not a threat to Israel. "The basic superiority and qualitative edge of Israel remains very much intact," he said. He said the U.S. is committed to maintaining Israel's security and qualitative military edge.

When Inouye asked Shultz why \$750 million in emergency economic assistance to Israel had been held up, the Secretary replied that it was done because providing all the funds at one time would not have forced Israel to take some of the tough economic measures that it has. He indicated that the funds may be provided when Israeli Premier Shimon Peres visits Washington in early April.

Shultz praised Israel's economic accomplishments over the last 18 months as being one of the most "dramatic" in the world. "The problems are not over, but they are a long way down the road to being over," he said.

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TEL AVIV (JTA) — A small explosive charge was detonated at the Geha crossroads outside Tel Aviv Thursday morning, but caused neither casualties nor damage. It was the latest in a series of terrorist blasts in the general Tel Aviv area in recent weeks.

# LEADING PALESTINIAN FIGURE FLOATS IDEA FOR AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE WITHOUT ANY PRE-CONDITIONS By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 13 (JTA) — Hanna Seniora, a leading Palestinian figure in East Jerusalem, said he was exploring the possibility of convening an international peace conference with no pre-conditions and in which Palestinian individuals would be part of a single Arab delegation.

At the same time, Seniora maintained that Palestinians in both Israel proper and the occupied territories have a right to launch attacks on "legitimate military targets" as long as there is no movement toward the peace table.

Seniora, who is the editor of the pro-PLO daily Al-Fajr and is one of two West Bank Palestinians declared acceptable by both the PLO and the Israel government as possible representatives in peace talks between Israel and a Jordan-Palestinian delegation, said he expected a reconciliation between Jordan and the PLO, following the recent rift between them, and suggested that new initiatives would follow.

"I believe in the next few months," Seniora told reporters Wednesday at a press breakfast sponsored by the Foreign Policy quarterly, "that new developments will surface."

Uri Avneri, editor of the Hebrew weekly, Ha'Olam Hazeh, and a former Knesset member of the leftist Progressive List for Peace, accompanied Seniora on his visit to Washington. The two will be in New York next week. The Seniora-Avneri visit is being sponsored by The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, an organization founded by Avneri, and its counterpart in the U.S.

## Support For The PLO Position

Maintaining that the PLO could not be expected to accept UN Security Council Resolution 242 — one of the U.S. government's conditions for an American-PLO dialogue — without a recognition of a Palestinian right to self-determination in return, Seniora supported Arafat's position in the U.S.-Jordanian discussions that ended in failure last month.

With the collapse of the talks in Amman, Hussein delivered a lengthy television address, blaming the PLO for not living up to its word, and suggesting that the Palestinians should find a more responsible leadership.

Seniora, who met this week with State Department officials as part of his and Avneri's two-week U.S. tour, said that in the aftermath of the Jordan-PLO rift the Reagan Administration was according the Middle East a very low priority, but that "the partners to the conflict were trying to get some new fresh ideas."

## Nature Of Proposed Peace Conference

Speaking to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency following the press talk, he said he was "floating" the idea of "an international peace conference with no pre-conditions." He said the invitation to the talks would be "not to Jordan, not to the PLO and not to Syria," but "to a joint Arab delegation."

"This way everyone will be satisfied," he said. "The Syrians will have their pet idea, which is an Arab joint delegation; the Palestinians will have PLO-nominated people and the PLO can say

'we appointed the Palestinians.' King Hussein will also have the Syrians involved because this is what he wants anyway, and the Israelis can at the same time say 'we are not talking to the PLO'."

Seniora maintained that his idea was merely an extension of the 1973 Geneva conference that almost reconvened in 1977 but was dropped when the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat took up his own peace initiative. The Geneva conference, however, was initially based on UN Security Council Resolution 338, which called for the implementation of Resolution 242, rejected by Arafat.

Seniora said he was sounding out officials in Washington on the new suggestion but that he had not yet received a response. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Richard Murphy is currently on a Middle East tour.

Last week Avneri raised the same suggestion to high-ranking officials in Amman. Avneri told the JTA, Avneri visited Jordan with a foreign passport and with what he said was the blessings of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres following the collapse of the Jordanian-PLO accord. But he said that he had committed himself not to disclose the contents of his discussions in Amman.

## Justifies Palestinian 'Armed Struggle' Against Israel

While stressing that the PLO was seeking a peaceful settlement with Israel, Seniora maintained that Palestinians had a right to continue the "armed struggle" against Israel in any part of the country.

Referring to a November resolution by Arafat in which he denounced terrorism only outside the occupied territories, Seniora said that "the area of struggle" that the PLO chief had in mind was all of mandated Palestine. Until there is an agreement between the Jewish and Palestinian national movements, Seniora said, "the whole area of Palestine is the area of struggle."

Seniora maintained there was a difference between legitimate acts of resistance and attacks on Israeli civilians.

"If some Palestinian wants to throw a Molotov cocktail on an Israeli army jeep, this is a legitimate military target," Seniora said. "And here we have differentiated between violence against civilians, which we condemn in the territories, and the area of the territories, and legitimate armed struggle for people who are seeking deliverance from occupation."

## TIGHT SECURITY IN HEBRON

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) — Tight security measures taken to protect the renovated Hadassah building in Hebron, soon to be occupied by Jewish settlers, do not constitute harassment of Arab shop-owners there, according to Maj. Gen. Ehud Barak, commander of the central region. Barak submitted a written statement to the Supreme Court in reply to complaints by Arab merchants that they were being harassed by the army.

Ten Arab-owned shops occupy space on the ground floor of the building. The Israel Defense Force in recent weeks erected fences around the shops and soldiers check every customer. The IDF says the precaution is aimed against possible sabotage of the building. The shopkeepers maintained in a petition to the court that their business suffered because customers do not want to undergo security checks. The high court reserved a decision on this matter.