

MAR 4 1987

PERES, SHAMIR ARGUE IN CABINET OVER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, BUT UNITY COALITION SEEN TO HOLD

By David Landau, Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- Premier Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had a sharp verbal exchange at Sunday's Cabinet meeting, but the long anticipated coalition crisis over the issue of an international conference for Middle East peace failed to materialize.

It was the first meeting between the two men around the Cabinet table in several weeks. Peres returned at noon Friday from a two-day visit to Cairo, where he and his hosts issued a joint statement committing their countries to strive to reach agreement this year on convening an international conference as a framework for direct negotiations between all of the parties concerned.

Shamir, who returned to Israel Wednesday from a 10-day visit to the U.S. only hours after Peres left for Cairo, made clear that his opposition to an international conference was as strong as ever. He stressed repeatedly that Peres had no mandate to agree to any undertaking on the part of Israel and that whatever resulted from his talks with Egypt's leaders would have to be brought before the Cabinet.

Peres Disputes Cabinet Argument

Peres, who had two meetings with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and lengthy discussions with his official host, Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid, told reporters on his return that there was no need for him to bring the joint statement to the Cabinet for ratification. He explained, however, that he opposed the idea of an international conference as a negotiating forum. The peace talks themselves must be direct, without outside intervention, he said. He said Shamir "has no mandate to reject such a conference."

Peres and the Egyptian leaders agreed in their joint statement that the Middle East conflict should be resolved in all its aspects, including the question of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Peres said they also agreed that the Palestinian representatives participating in the negotiations must be persons acceptable to all of the parties. The Palestine Liberation Organization was not mentioned. According to members of Peres' entourage, this signified Egypt's understanding that Israel opposes any role for the PLO in peace talks.

Discussions Reportedly Set

According to Haaretz correspondent Akiva Eldar, who accompanied Peres to Cairo, there is an understanding that Egypt and Israel will begin discussions on preparatory talks, with the participation of others to create a list of acceptable Palestinian members of a Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating delegation.

Peres ducked questions of an impending Labor-Likud split that could bring down the unity government. He insisted the joint communique in

Cairo was within the framework of government policy and said he would report on his talks to "the Premier and the Cabinet."

Earlier, Shamir said he had not spoken to Peres for nearly two weeks and had received no reports from him while he was in Egypt. "I will not chase him," Shamir was quoted as saying.

'Cool But Correct.' Then Argument

While the Premier refused to react to the Cairo communique Friday, observers were primed for an explosive confrontation in the Cabinet Sunday. But the session turned out to be "cool but correct." Shamir and Peres reported on their respective visits to the U.S. and Egypt.

What triggered their exchange was a remark by Likud Deputy Premier David Levy. After hearing both reports, he said the unity coalition could not continue "speaking in two voices."

At that point, the Shamir-Peres rift emerged. They exchanged barbs directly rather than through proxies, as has been the case. According to knowledgeable sources, their verbal duel was as follows:

Shamir: "He who says that anyone who opposes an international conference kills the peace process should take back his words."

Peres: "He who accuses me for wanting a conference of a Soviet pattern, and that I want to return to the 1967 borders, he is the one who should take back his words."

Shamir: "Indeed, he who presses today for a conference wants to return to the 1967 lines." (He was referring to Israel's pre-1967 borders.)

Peres: "He who does the opposite kills the peace process."

Shamir: "If you say that you don't want the 1967 borders, then this meeting was worth its while."

Peres: "You don't understand the differences between negotiations within an international conference and negotiations which open with an international conference."

Shamir: "I believe that the conference is a Soviet-Arab idea."

Shamir, Peres Lament

Shamir expressed "sadness" over the latest developments. He accused the Labor Alignment, headed by Peres, of trying to impose its views on the rest of the government, contrary to the coalition guidelines.

Peres said he was appalled by the "ugly campaign" against him. "There was a rotation in the Premiership, but not a rotation in policy," he said, adding that he would continue to work toward an international conference, and whoever wanted to stop him should bring the matter before the Cabinet for a vote.

The consensus after the Cabinet session was that the present crisis has subsided and the national unity government will remain intact for the time being.

In fact, it seemed apparent on Friday that Likud in particular wants to avoid a break. MK Ronnie Milo, a close aide to Shamir, played down the importance of Peres' talks in Egypt. "The mountain has produced a mouse," he said.

ISRAELIS DON'T WANT EARLY ELECTIONS, BUT WOULD GIVE LABOR A WIN: POLL

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- A public opinion poll published Sunday shows that a substantial majority of Israelis oppose early national elections, but if they were to be held, the Labor Party would clearly defeat Likud.

The poll, conducted by the Dahaf Institute, found a 63-35 percent majority favors continuation of the unity coalition government. Two percent had no opinion.

In the event of early elections, however, Labor would win 47 Knesset mandates compared to the 40 it presently holds. Likud would win 36 seats, compared to its current 41 seats. The rightwing Tehiya Party would win six Knesset seats, one more than it has in the present Knesset, and the leftist Citizens Rights Movement (CRM) would increase from four to five seats. The religious bloc would remain unchanged: The five Orthodox parties have a combined total of 13 seats in the 120-member Knesset.

ISRAEL DENIES TOWER ALLEGATION THAT RABIN OFFERED INSTRUCTORS FOR CONTRAS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- The Defense Ministry dismissed as "totally groundless" an allegation in the Tower Commission's report that Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin had offered to send Israeli instructors to help the Contras, the Nicaraguan rebels attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government.

On the contrary, Rabin received a request for such aid and rejected it "out of hand," according to a Ministry statement released Friday.

The Tower Commission was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to investigate the sale of U.S. arms to Iran.

The statement said: "The report of the Tower Commission issued yesterday (Thursday) in the U.S. contains, among other things, a memorandum conveyed by Col. North to National Security Advisor John Poindexter. According to this memorandum, the Defense Minister had allegedly offered aid to the Contras in the form of instructors. This allegation is totally groundless."

The statement was referring to Lt. Col. Oliver North, a former National Security Council employee, and Vice Admiral John Poindexter, the former director. Both were dismissed after the Iran-Contra scandal broke last November.

Said North Requested Instructors

The statement disclosed that during Rabin's visit to the U.S. in May 1986, North telephoned him and asked for an urgent meeting. "In the meeting, which took place at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel (in New York), North dwelt at length on the problems of the Contras and said he had suggested to the President to organize a private group of some 20 to 50 Israeli or British instructors.

"Col. North said he preferred a group of Israeli instructors, since they have greater experience and also speak Spanish. In his opinion, the matter had to be conducted privately and not via governments. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected the proposal out of hand during his meeting with Col. North."

FRANCE THROWS BOOK AT TERRORIST KILLER OF TWO; REVENGE THREATENED, AS THOUGHT

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, March 1 (JTA) -- A French court sentenced Lebanese terrorist Georges Ibrahim Abdullah, 35, to life imprisonment Saturday for complicity in the 1982 murders of Israeli diplomat Yaakov Barsimantov and American Military Attache Col. Charles Ray.

The stiff sentence surprised many inasmuch as the state prosecutor had asked the panel of seven magistrates for a sentence of "no more than 10 years" to avoid making a martyr of Abdullah and exposing France to terrorist attacks.

The sentence is seen here as a test of French and West European reactions to terrorist threats. Legal authorities and government and opposition politicians stressed that public opinion and the jury demonstrated their determination not to yield to threats and blackmail.

The court also awarded 150,000 Francs (\$25,000) in damages to Ray's widow, Mrs. Sharon Ray, and 100,000 Francs (\$16,000) each to his son and daughter.

Mrs. Barsimantov was not represented in court. She was awarded a symbolic one Franc (17 cents).

Abdullah's lawyer, Jacques Verges, who will defend Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie next May in Lyon, warned that the verdict "will be considered a declaration of war by Abdullah's militant Arab friends." Verges told reporters that "Abdullah wanted either an outright acquittal which would have recognized his combattant status or a heavy sentence, but not a lenient or political verdict."

French radio reported that terrorist threats were received immediately after the sentence was read in a packed courtroom by presiding Judge Michel Colomb. Heavy police reinforcements were deployed throughout Paris minutes afterward. Police units checked passing cars and passersby and searched customers in the main department stores, some of which have been targets of terrorist attacks in recent months.

Barsimantov and Ray were shot to death outside their homes. A woman, Jacqueline Esbert, a Lebanese Christian Marxist, will be tried in absentia next spring as the actual killer. She is believed to be hiding in northern Lebanon.

ISRAEL MAY BE CUTTING ITS OWN 'MARGIN OF SAFETY,' AIPAC DIRECTOR TESTIFIES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Israel's economic austerity program, coupled by the increasing arms buildup of its Arab enemies, may be cutting Israel's "margin of safety," Thomas Dine, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), warned Thursday.

"What we have is a pattern of accelerated Arab buildup while Israel substantially cuts its forces," Dine told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "The effort to maintain the qualitative edge adds to the burden on the Israeli economy, further worsening the quantitative gap in the Arab states' favor."

The director of the pro-Israel lobbying organization was testifying in support of the

Reagan Administration's proposal to provide Israel \$3 billion in aid for the 1988 fiscal year. The \$1.2 billion in economic grants and \$1.8 billion in military is the same amount appropriated for the current year.

Among the seven largest arms importers are Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Jordan, Dine noted. He added that the United States has been a major supplier of the weapons to "these avowed enemies of Israel."

"American sales of new weapons to hostile Arab nations have had a particularly profound impact on the military balance between Israel and those states because American technology is often superior to that of competing weapons," Dine stressed.

He praised U.S. economic assistance to Israel, noting that it "has made a concrete difference in Israel's struggle to regain economic stability" at a time when Israel has undertaken "some of the toughest austerity measures ever imposed by a democracy in a compressed period of time."

Dine urged increased U.S. economic assistance to the West Bank, over the Administration's \$7 million request for 1988. He also urged substantial contributions from the West European countries and Japan.

King Hussein of Jordan "has sought to implement an ambitious \$1.4 billion development plan to upgrade the skills, abilities and incomes of Palestinians in the territories in an effort to promote a moderate influence and leadership there more likely to engage in the peace process," Dine pointed out.

In addition to the lack of funds, Dine noted that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait "have actively moved to undercut King Hussein and bolster" the Palestine Liberation Organization "by donating \$9.5 million and \$5 million, respectively, to revive a committee dedicated to promoting PLO influence in the territories."

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS' LEGAL DIRECTORS WELCOME RULING IN FLORIDA SABBATH CASE

NEW YORK, March 1 (JTA) -- Legal affairs directors of major U.S. Jewish organizations expressed pleasure and relief Thursday at the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that prohibits states from denying unemployment benefits to employees dismissed for declining to work on the Sabbath.

The Court ruled 8-1 Wednesday in favor of Paula Hobbie, who had been fired from her job at a jewelry store in Winter Park, Fla., for refusing to work on Friday evenings and Saturdays because of her Seventh Day Adventist religious beliefs.

Because she changed religions after she was hired, the State of Florida considered her subsequent refusal to work to be misconduct, which then disqualified her from unemployment benefits. A federal court had ruled in favor of Florida.

The American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith all had filed amicus briefs in support of Hobbie.

"The Supreme Court's 8-1 decision is a major victory for religious liberty for all," said Samuel Rabinov, AJCommittee legal director. "Florida's refusal to award unemployment benefits to Miss Hobbie was a violation of the 'Free Exercise Clause' of the First Amendment."

That clause prohibits Congress from making a law "prohibiting the free exercise" of religion.

Marc Stern, AJCongress legal affairs director, echoed Rabinov's views and pointed out that the decision reaffirms two recent Court decisions. The Court ruled in *Estate of Thornton v. Caldor* (1985) and *Bowen v. Roy* (1986) that accommodations such as shifting public school graduations to avoid conflicting with Sabbath are not government establishment of religion, which the First Amendment prohibits.

In addition, he said the decision places the "Free Exercise Clause on very firm ground."

Jill Kahn, ADL's assistant legal affairs director, also was "extremely pleased." She said the decision was significant in that it reaffirmed two cases that prohibited denial of unemployment benefits because of religious beliefs, *Sherber v. Verner* (1963) and *Thomas v. Review Board of the Indiana Employment Security Division* (1981).

INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS GROUP SEEKS TO TREAT SOVIET WORK CAMP INMATES By Judith Colp

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- About a year ago, Martin Motew, a Chicago physician, sat in the Moscow apartment of a Soviet refusenik and listened to tales of the Soviet work camps that made him cringe. Prisoners were given poor nutrition and those with active tuberculosis drank from the same cups as the rest of the camp.

"I began to conceptualize the idea that someone has to look after these people," Motew said Thursday at a press conference at the National Press Club.

He decided to found the International Physician's Commission for the Protection of Prisoners. The group is committed to bringing attention to the poor medical care of Soviet Jews and the group is a member of the Union of Council for Soviet Jews.

The Physician's Commission hope to establish a neutral group of physicians, probably affiliated with the Red Cross, that would go into the labor camps to treat patients. About 50 doctors from the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Sweden and Israel are currently members.

Vladimir Brodsky, a cardiologist who is co-chairman of the commission, spent a year in Siberia as a political prisoner before being allowed to emigrate to Israel. He described the labor camps as rampant with disease including tuberculosis, which infects about 50 prisoners a year, pneumonia, and scabs.

The sick were rarely given medicine and were forced to work long hours in sub-zero temperatures. Prisoners are permitted to bathe about once every three weeks, are fed on small amounts of bread and herring, sleep in overcrowded rooms on hardwood floors and are often beaten by the guards.

Even the care they could receive in Moscow is "primitive," said Kenneth Prager, a member of the Physician's Commission who visited Moscow last year.

"The staples of twentieth century medical care are lacking. There is a virtual absence of such disposable items as syringes, needles, catheters and intravenous tubing in hospitals and clinics," said Prager, a New York internist.

Prager added that Soviet Jews receive the most inferior care. When a Jewish woman brought her young son to a doctor because he was wetting his bed, she was told that the problem was caused by his circumcision.

AROUND THE WORLD, JEWS & OFFICIALS RECITE NAMES OF 11,000 REFUSENIKS By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, March 1 (JTA) -- In one of the largest events in the history of the pro-Soviet Jewry movement, activists, families of refuseniks and local government officials here gathered Thursday in more than 50 college campuses, 104 cities and 43 countries to read aloud the names of some 11,000 refuseniks.

At noon local time in their respective cities, Natan Sharansky began the chronicle in Jerusalem, Elie Wiesel in Paris and Mayor Ed Koch here. Thirty-six members of Congress read the names on Capitol Hill. Communities in Australia, South Africa, Brazil and England also participated in the demonstration, organized by B'nai B'rith International.

The list included all those Soviet Jews who had been refused permission to emigrate more than once. Organizers said about 360,000 others had requested permission to emigrate once. It was the same list presented by presidents of major American Jewish organizations to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the recent U.S.-Soviet summit in Iceland.

Each City Read Part

Each city read a part of the list. In New York, the demonstrators read names of about half of the people refused in Moscow. San Francisco participants read names of refuseniks from Minsk. And in Los Angeles, refuseniks from Leningrad were noted. On some of the college campuses, students reportedly read all 11,000 names.

Vladimir Slepak, a 17-year refusenik who is still in Moscow, often tells Western visitors, "If you turn your eyes away from us for just a moment, we will cease to exist." His son Alexander repeated those words here Thursday before reading the names of his parents, who have spent five years in Siberia.

"Slavery is an ugly thing and we are witnessing the slavery of our days in Russia," Alexander Slepak said. "Vladimir Slepak has always been fighting for others to leave -- that is why (the Soviet government) keeps him there."

Koch recalled the last time he read names in protest -- in 1971, while a member of Congress. But those were names of American soldiers killed in Vietnam. He noted that the pressure from demonstrations like that one eventually brought an end to the American involvement in Vietnam.

"In the Soviet Union, they don't respond to the electorate," Koch said. "But they do occasionally respond to the pressure of world opinion."

He then offered this plea to Mikhail Gorbachev. "Let my people go ... let our people go. That is what we are asking the Soviet Union." Then he began to recite names -- Boris Lifschitz, the Lieberman family, the Lerner family...

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: EILAT LEADERS FEAR LOSS OF TABA COULD MEAN ECONOMIC DISASTER By Susan Birnbaum

EILAT, Israel, March 1 (JTA) -- If an international arbitration panel decides to give ownership of the half-square-mile stretch of Sinai beach called Tabá to Egypt instead of Israel, the economic consequences could be serious for Eilat.

Dov Sharf, senior assistant to mayor Rafi Hochman of Eilat, the Red Sea resort city less than nine miles north of Tabá, explained his concern last month to a group of Jewish National Fund of America visitors to Eilat.

Sharf, a major in the Israel Defense Force reserves and former IDF liaison to the American contingent of the Multinational Force (MNF) of peace observers in Sinai, conceded that Tabá holds no strategic military value.

But that is not the issue. He said Tabá "is important to Israel, despite its small size, making up 20 percent of the beachfront of a town that depends on tourism for its survival." He noted that Tabá is already highly developed for tourists, while Egypt has done nothing with its 160 miles of Sinai beach front.

Hochman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that Tabá is crucial to Eilat's future prosperity. "The Egyptians got Sharm el-Sheikh, Dahab and Nuqiba and didn't develop them," he said. He added that "We have all the proof that Tabá is part of Israel."

According to Sharf, the dispute over Tabá could have been avoided if Israel had taken a stronger stand when it agreed to total withdrawal from Sinai. He noted that the demarcation line between Tabá and Sinai is not an international border but a cease-fire line. He pointed out that the Camp David accords stipulated that Israel and Egypt would establish an international boundary, but did not say where.

Several years of on-and-off-again negotiations failed to break the impasse and Israel only reluctantly agreed to binding arbitration. It had favored the conciliation method, also allowed by the peace treaty with Egypt, which could have yielded a compromise. Egypt insisted, however, on international arbitration as one of the conditions for returning its Ambassador to Tel Aviv last year.

"Israel has presented its case well and it has a 50 percent chance to win based solely on justice," Sharf said. He added that although political considerations could play a role in the Tabá decision, he had confidence in the arbitration panel composed of distinguished jurists from three countries.

He said that although Israel wants total vindication of its claim to Tabá, a compromise decision would be a victory. But for the Egyptians, Sharf said, "Even a compromise would be a loss," because President Mubarak couldn't justify it to his people.

'HATE CRIMES' BILL REINTRODUCED

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Rep. Dan Glickman (D. Kan.) reintroduced Thursday his "Hate Crimes" bill that would impose federal criminal penalties for damage to religious property and injury to persons in the free exercise of their religious beliefs.

The bill would establish penalties of up to life imprisonment in cases where death results, and fines up to \$500,000. Last year, Glickman's nearly identical bill was passed by the House of Representatives, but was not considered by the Senate.

Glickman said he also is introducing a combination of the "Hate Crimes" bill with another mandating that the Justice Department gather hate crimes statistics for an annual report.