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PERES SAYS PNC MEETING HAS NOT DAMPENED HIS HOPE FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 22 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Shimon Peres insisted this week that his hopes for Middle East peace talks within the framework of an international conference have not been dampened by the obdurate stand taken at the Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in a tightly-guarded hall some 12 miles outside Algiers.

Aides to the Foreign Minister said he will continue to pursue the idea of negotiations with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation despite Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat's renunciation of his 1985 accord with King Hussein and his apparent embrace of the most extreme terrorist groups in the name of Palestinian unity.

Peres briefed the Labor Party ministerial caucus on his intentions Tuesday night and made sure that his position was promptly conveyed to the media. According to a report in Davar Wednesday, Peres will bring his proposals before the Cabinet within 10 days. He is confident of American support, confident that an international conference will serve as a format for direct talks between Israel and all the parties concerned, Davar reported.

His aides said Peres is determined to go all-out over the conference issue, even if it means dissolution of the Labor-Likud unity coalition government. He believes the nation will back him in early elections.

Meeting Sends Chill Through Diplomatic Circles

Nevertheless, events in Algiers where the 426-member PNC, the so-called Palestinian parliament in exile, is meeting for the first time since 1984, sent a chill through diplomatic quarters.

Arafat's threat of stepped-up terrorist warfare against Israel, his stated goal of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and his reconciliation with extremists such as George Habash and Naif Hawatmeh and the Syrian-backed PLO dissidents who drove his forces from Lebanon in 1984, cast a pall over peace prospects in the region.

Equally chilling was the demand by the PLO's "foreign minister" Farouk Kaddoumi that the Camp David accords be cancelled and that Egypt return "to its proper place in the Arab world." Speaking at the PNC Wednesday, he also insisted on special relations with Jordan, calling for a confederation of two independent states--Jordan and Palestine. Kaddoumi also urged the strengthening of the 21-member Arab League, from which Egypt was suspended after its peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Likud's Position Seen As Vindicated

A pessimistic assessment of the situation was given in Congressional testimony in Washington Tuesday by Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who is regarded as the State Department's top expert on the Middle East. (See separate story from Washington.)

Murphy's views and the resurgent bellicosity in Algiers are seen as vindication of the Likud position that an international conference would imperil Israel and that it is useless to seek Palestinian negotiating partners.

Premier Yitzhak Shamir has been pounding these points home in a bitter public feud with Peres which some observers see as a calculated attempt to bring down the unity government. Shamir is said to be convinced that public opinion is overwhelmingly behind him and an election fought over the peace issue would result in a Likud victory.

Peres, meanwhile, was quoted as telling his Cabinet colleagues that "What happened in Algiers does not hurt peace prospects. We took into account (the need) to make progress toward peace without Arafat and without his Fatah because they are not interested in peace."

He told Labor Party members here that "We will continue to strive for peace with Jordan, with the inhabitants of the administered areas and with other regional states. The chance of progress is very great."

Broad Consensus On Procedures

According to Peres' aides, consultations with the Soviet Union, the United States and the Jordanians resulted in a broad consensus on procedures for an international conference. Moscow now agrees on the need for direct one-on-one negotiations in regional subcommittees and agrees that the conference plenary will not be allowed to impose its will on the bilateral negotiations, the aides say.

Sources close to the Foreign Minister stressed that for all practical purposes, the peace process initially would be limited to a dialogue between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The Israel-Egyptian peace treaty is holding satisfactorily and Syria is unlikely to attend peace talks, at least in their initial stage, the sources said.

U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS SHOULD NOT BECOME HOSTAGE TO THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF THE PLO
By Judith Colp

WASHINGTON, April 22 (JTA) -- The Middle East peace process should not become "hostage to the internal politics of the PLO," a State Department official said Tuesday. But Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, admitted that the Palestine Liberation Organization's repudiation of its 1985 accord with Jordan on a joint approach to peace at its conference this week in Algiers may be a "diversion" from negotiations.

"It (the repudiation) does nothing to get the negotiations started," Murphy said in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "It may prove to be a diversion in getting the Palestinians to the table in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian conference."

He added, "We don't think the peace process should become hostage to internal politics of the PLO and we will continue our efforts to give a hand to people in the region who are suffering

from a lack of progress in the peace process. "Murphy said a Jordanian statement Tuesday indicated that the Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in Algeria would not "change the principle that they're interested in getting to negotiations."

U.S. Expresses Concern To Algeria

Earlier Tuesday, State Department spokesman Charles Redman refused to comment on the PNC conference. But Redman said the U.S. expressed to Algeria its concern it has admitted to the country Abu Abbas, the terrorist accused of spearheading the October 1985 hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in which an American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, was murdered. The U.S. has no extradition treaty with Algeria.

Murphy described the PNC conference as "the continued mining by the PLO of that rich vein of frustration and sense of despair that they can't make their voices heard and achieve their rights." The repudiation of the 1985 accord was an attempt to "bring back to the fold some radicals," he said. But he noted that the conference decided not to break ties with Egypt.

Murphy said the PLO raid Sunday into Israel, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed, was clearly timed to coincide with the conference. But he told the Congressmen it would be very difficult for the PLO to open a major front in Israel.

On the subject of peace talks, Murphy said U.S. attempts to start direct talks between Israel and Jordan have been stalemated over the issue of an international peace conference.

"We are trying to iron out the difficulties. Direct negotiations have problems for the Arabs who don't want negotiations without an international conference. They feel they must have international legitimization," Murphy said. "But we're worried that the conference could become a political theater for excessive rhetoric and make things messy," he added.

Murphy said he expected visits to Washington sometime this year by King Hussein of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

CONTROVERSY OVER PENDING APPEAL OF AN IMPRISONED IDF OFFICER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 22 (JTA) -- The pending appeal to the Supreme Court by an Israel Defense Force officer serving an 18-year prison sentence for treason has embroiled the government, the IDF and the internal security service, Shin Bet, in a dispute over what their position should be in the case.

The high court set May 24 as the date it will begin hearings on the appeal of former Lt. Azzat Nafsu, from the Circassian village of Kfar Kamma, who was convicted by a military tribunal in 1980 and stripped of his rank. Nafsu contends he was railroaded on false evidence and forced to confess under coercion by his Shin Bet interrogators.

A meeting Tuesday night attended by senior Justice Ministry officials, Shin Bet leaders and senior military authorities reportedly broke down as a result of sharp differences between Shin Bet which prepared the case against Nafsu, the IDF which tried him, and civilian legal officials.

IDF officers reportedly expressed reservations for the first time over the strength of the

State's case in the appeal. Shin Bet officials are said to be anxious to avoid the hearing for fear it will expose their methods of evidence gathering and obtaining confessions. Shin Bet reportedly proposed a Presidential pardon and release of Nafsu in order to close the case before it reaches the Supreme Court.

Now Shin Bet is reported to be pressing for a judicial commission of inquiry into its investigatory techniques. Such a probe would forestall full exposure of its method at a Supreme Court hearing.

DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION EXPERT SAYS ID CARD BEARING SIGNATURE AND PHOTO OF DEMJANJUK IS AUTHENTIC

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 22 (JTA) -- The head of the Israeli police document identification laboratory testified Tuesday that an SS identification card bearing the signature and photograph of suspected war criminal John Demjanjuk is authentic.

Amnon Bezaleli appeared for the prosecution in Jerusalem district court as the Demjanjuk trial resumed after the Passover recess. He said there was "no doubt whatever" of the signature of Karl Streibel, commandant of the Trawniki camp where Demjanjuk allegedly was trained for guard duty at Treblinka.

As for Demjanjuk's signature, there is only "an extremely slight possibility" that it was forged, Bezaleli said. He said he had compared it with Demjanjuk's signature on numerous documents he signed over the years and discerned an "inner authenticity" but could "not definitely" determine it was signed by the accused.

The Ukrainian-born Demjanjuk, a former resident of Cleveland, Ohio, has been identified by a number of Treblinka survivors as the sadistic guard known as "Ivan the Terrible" who ran the gas chambers at the death camp and brutally assaulted inmates. Demjanjuk contends he was a German prisoner during most of World War II, that he was never anywhere near Treblinka and is a victim of mistaken identity.

The ID card, which Israel obtained from the Soviet Union, has been called a forgery by Demjanjuk's lawyers. Bezaleli told the court he could not be more definite about the signature because it is in Russian Cyrillic script. He explained, however, that he could discern changes in the way Demjanjuk shaped letters--even in Russian--as his handwriting was gradually influenced by the Latin letters of English during the 40 years that he lived in the United States.

Bezaleli also testified that he found indications that the "original photo" on the card may at one time have been removed but "it was not changed" for another.

HERZOG REDUCES THE SENTENCE OF ANOTHER JEWISH UNDERGROUND MEMBER

JERUSALEM, April 22 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog is continuing to reduce the sentences of members of a Jewish terrorist underground in the West Bank convicted of assaults on Arabs.

He announced Wednesday that the seven-year sentence imposed on Yitzhak Ganiram will be shortened by three months which makes him eligible for release in 18 months for good behavior.

Ganiram was convicted of involvement in 1980 car-bombings which maimed two Arab mayors in the West Bank and resulted in the death of a Druze police sapper, and in the 1982 machinegun attack on the Islamic College in Hebron where three students were killed.

According to a spokesperson for Herzog, the President acted on the recommendations of the prison authorities and took into consideration that Ganiram expressed "regret" for his offenses and that he is the father of seven children.

Herzog last month reduced the life sentences of three other members of the underground to 25 years, which makes them eligible for eventual parole. Of the 28 underground members convicted and sentenced, only eight are still in prison.

POLL SHOWS IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD NOW LABOR AND LIKUD WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PUT TOGETHER A GOVERNING MAJORITY By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 22 (JTA) -- If Knesset elections were held now, the outcome almost certainly would be a new version of the present stalemated national unity coalition, according to the latest opinion poll published in Maariv Tuesday. The poll, conducted last month among 1,236 adult Jewish voters by the Modiin Ezrachi organization, found that neither Labor nor Likud would be able to form a governing coalition with their respective leftwing or rightwing allies. Labor, however, would emerge stronger than Likud with 48 Knesset seats compared to the 40 it won in the last elections in 1984. Likud was down from 41 seats to 35 in new elections.

But neither party would be able to put together a governing majority in the 120-member Knesset because the rightwing opposition parties have gained ground since 1984, possibly at Likud's expense, and the leftist parties which might align with Labor have lost support.

The ultra-nationalist Tehiya Party would increase its Knesset strength from five to seven seats in new elections. Rabbi Meir Kahane's extremist Kach Party would go from one to four seats. The poll showed the leftist Shinui down from three to two seats and Mapam reduced from six to two.

Among the Orthodox factions, only the National Religious Party gained support. It would win six seats compared to its present four. The Aguda Israel and Shas Parties would retain their present strength of two and four seats, respectively. The leftist Citizens Rights Movement (CRM) and the Communist Party would hold steady at four and six seats, respectively.

New elections would wipe out the Orthodox Morasha Party which has two seats in the Knesset and the Tami and Ometz parties which have one each, the poll found.

POLICE PROBE ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM AT COUNTRY CLUB

By Fredda Sacharow
Jewish Exponent Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA, April 22 (JTA) -- As workers at Woodcrest Country Club in Cherry Hill, NJ, sandblasted swastikas and offensive drawings off the walls of their clubhouse, police continued their investigation into what observers termed one of the worst displays of anti-Semitic vandalism

they could recall. "This is the largest, most extensive incident I'm aware of in years," said Alan Respler, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey. "Some of the writing was so obscene even the television cameras couldn't tape it."

Respler was called to the predominantly Jewish club over the weekend after maintenance workers discovered slurs and obscenities spray-painted in black and red on the building walls.

Woodcrest general manager Robert Sierra, who was one of the first to arrive on the scene after workers summoned him with an early-morning call, called the attack "anti-Semitic terrorism."

Hate-filled graffiti covered much of the exterior of the club's main building and was splashed over the sidewalk and a car left overnight at the club. In addition, black swastikas were painted on the grass at the 10th and 13th tees of the club's golf course.

Believed To Be An Isolated Case

A police spokesman said Monday that because no other Jewish facility or synagogue was attacked and because his office has not heard of related incidents in any other local district, police believe the vandalism to be an isolated case.

No group or persons have called the media to take credit, and no other Jewish institution has been hit, so we're looking at a local level," said Cherry Hill Detective John Long.

"It may be juveniles, it may be young adults or it may be someone with problems with the club," said Long, adding that police investigators are interviewing management personnel and employees of the 400-member club.

"To my recollection, this is the worst case of anti-Semitism in some time," he said.

The country club has tripled its own security in the wake of the incident, said Dr. Philip Sliplan, president of the club's Board. Long estimated the damage to the greens alone could run between \$5,000 and \$10,000, but Woodcrest officials declined to estimate the final cost of the vandalism. "The dollar figure really pales when you compare it with the frustration and anger," Sliplan said.

Club And JWV Offer Reward

The club has offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandal or vandals. Lee Vegotsky, Southern New Jersey representative of the Jewish War Veterans, announced Sunday that his organization will add a \$500 reward.

Respler said under New Jersey's ethnic and racial terrorism law, persons convicted of ethnically or racially motivated vandalism can face up to five years in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Woodcrest, a member-owned club founded in 1929, draws its largely Jewish membership from Cherry Hill and surrounding communities, as well as from Philadelphia. It has been the victim of anti-Semitic attacks in the past, Sliplan said, but none quite so extensive or virulent.

As they gathered at the club in the wake of the most recent incident, many of the members commented on its timing: the fourth day of Passover, the day before Easter Sunday -- traditionally a time when anti-Jewish sentiment tends to run high -- and the week before Yom Hashoah, the commemoration of the Holocaust.

ELON VIEWS DUAL LOYALTY WITH PRIDE, NOT PROBLEMS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 22 (JTA) -- There is nothing wrong with dual loyalty, according to Israeli writer Amos Elon. Fear of expressing this is a cultural vestige, he said, and leads to the kind of queasiness that surrounds the Jonathan Pollard spy case.

Elon spoke, with Rabbi Marshall Meyer of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun here, at the synagogue at a recent conclave of the New Israel Fund, each addressing himself to the issue "Does Israel represent us all?" The meeting was sponsored by the New Israel Fund and the Metropolitan Division of the American Jewish Congress in cooperation with Congregation B'nai Jeshurun.

The matter of the Pollard affair arose as a response to Elon's request that American Jews "meddle even more" than usual in Israeli affairs, with neither fear nor apology, affirming that both Israelis and American Jews share a "common agenda."

"What is meddling in Israeli affairs?" Elon asked. "For example, I wish the New Israel Fund would meddle even more." The New Israel Fund is a grant-making foundation dedicated to strengthening democracy in Israel.

Issue Of Dual Loyalty

The issue of dual loyalty was brought up as a question following upon Elon's strong suggestion that American Jews raise their voices in criticism of Israeli policies, and followed up a controversy begun last month when Israeli political theorist Shlomo Avineri wrote an "open letter to an American friend" in which he charged that American Jewish leaders exhibited a "galut" mentality in reaction to the Pollard case.

In his letter, published in The Jerusalem Post, Avineri accused prominent American Jewish leaders of "cringing" in fear of charges of dual loyalty.

"I would say that I for one am not so much scared of it. Why not have dual loyalty, or even triple loyalty?" Elon asked. "Of course," he answered himself, "fright of dual loyalty is based on fragile understanding, and that's why I'm so angry at the Israeli government's precarious balance in hiring the 'poor schnook, Pollard.'"

Need For Ongoing Criticism

Elon emphasized the ongoing need for criticism of the Israeli government and its policies.

"It would help if American Jews would not be as consistent as they have been in the past" in supporting Israel without differentiating between what they really believe and what they think they should believe. "I wish you would meddle more," Elon told the audience.

"The true miracle of Israeli life is that after 40 years of warfare, Israel has remained a fairly decent society without being afraid of airing its problems," Elon said. American Jews have usually felt they should refrain from criticizing Israel, he said, in contradistinction to Israelis' own compulsion to criticize themselves and their government. "How can American Jews' interference affect Israel if Israelis can't?" Elon asked.

"The man on the street would have handled the Pollard affair better than (Israeli Premier Yitzhak) Shamir," Elon offered. "What we have

seen this past few weeks is a difference between respectability and authority -- a totally irresponsible authority." Hiring an American Jew as a spy was "an insane idea," Elon said.

If the Pollard affair was a rogue operation, "how do you get out of it once it's done?" he asked. "You either deny everything -- and you sacrifice. Or else you admit everything. But the Israeli government neither apologized nor helped. Instead, they disclosed a little and they denied a little. And caused the tragedy. From a patriotic point of view," said Elon, "it's ridiculous."

'We Ended Caught In A Vise'

Meyer suggested that "We Jews are not secure enough to say of Pollard, 'What's the difference?' If he were a Christian, it would not have bothered us. But to take a Jew," and make him a spy, said Meyer, "we ended caught in a vise."

Both Elon and Meyer took the Holocaust as a point of reference for American Jews suffering from guilt feelings. "We feel guilty that we didn't do enough then, and we haven't done enough for Israel since then," Meyer said.

Elon suggested that "The Holocaust impressed this kind of mentality" on Jews, causing them to refrain from criticizing Israel. "But supporting blindly every Israeli policy is not conducive to the health of Israel," he said.

"I think it comes down to we really don't know who we are," Meyer said. "We must address ourselves to it. With more internal strength, we could say of the Pollard affair, 'No, that's immoral.'"

Meyer said that "I don't think we are united today. I think we are fractured and atomized, because of our sense of guilt. But we can certainly get closer to each other."

Meyer, an America-born human rights activist, reflected on his many years in Argentina, where he established a Conservative Jewish seminary in 1962, saying, "I wish that I had tried to build that seminary in Israel."

Remarking that very few actively observant, participant Conservative Jews had settled in Israel, he cautioned, "We must once and for all understand that unless there will be religious pluralism, there is a danger and the possibility of Israel becoming a theocracy, with the Orthodox's complicity, and the silence of the non-religious."

VISIT BY RUSSIANS TO ISRAEL MAY STILL TAKE PLACE AS PLANNED

PARIS, April 22 (JTA) -- A visit to Israel by a Soviet delegation of consular level will take place as planned, according to a report from Moscow Tuesday, though the date was not announced. The delegation "has not yet bought its plane tickets but the visit has not been cancelled," Gennady Gerasimov, chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Information Directorate, told a press conference.

This contradicted a report from Kuwait last week which quoted the visiting Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Patrovsky, as saying "We have decided to cancel the visit" because Israel made propaganda use of it.

Israel welcomes the visit but maintains that a similar Israeli delegation should go to Moscow. Gerasimov said earlier there would be no exchange visits between the two countries.