

LABOR PARTY LEADERS VOTE 41-2 TO QUIT GOVERNMENT COALITION

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 10 (JTA) -- The Labor Party leadership seems determined to end its coalition partnership with Likud, which it accuses of wrecking the peace process on which the government had embarked.

The party's Executive voted 41-2 Monday for a resolution recommending that Labor leave the unity government it formed with Likud in December 1988.

The resolution will be submitted for approval to Labor's Central Committee, which is expected to convene in about three weeks.

The resolution charges that Likud "profoundly damaged the peace initiative" by burdening it with restrictions and preconditions at the Likud Central Committee meeting in Tel Aviv on July 5.

It specifically blames Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud leader, for agreeing to attach four guiding principles to his peace plan likely to make it unacceptable to the Palestinians.

The principles were demanded by three hard-line Likud ministers, Ariel Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Moda'i, who made no secret of their desire to kill the plan altogether.

Labor's resolution was introduced by Vice Premier Shimon Peres, the party's chairman, with the support of Labor's No. 2 man, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Rabin reportedly had been leaning against leaving the government. But his speech to the Executive on Monday left little room for the party to adopt any other course.

U.S. Intervention Reported

Yet, as observers noted, three weeks is a long time in Israeli politics. There are both external and internal factors that could prevent or delay a breakup of the uneasy Labor-Likud alliance.

The United States, which had endorsed the peace plan before it was amended, intervened dramatically Sunday night.

The Bush administration informed Jerusalem that a high-level State Department delegation will visit Israel next week. Its sole purpose will be to examine the viability of the peace initiative in light of the new Likud conditions. (See separate story.)

The Americans apparently made it known to both Israeli political parties that they would feel offended if the unity government collapsed before the State Department team arrived in Jerusalem.

There also reportedly has been intense pressure on Labor's leadership from American Jewish leaders, who cautioned the party not to make a hasty exit from the government.

Finally, there is the current political climate in Israel, which does not seem to favor Labor's chances at the polls if the government collapses and new elections are called.

Nevertheless, both Peres and Rabin, in speeches to the party Executive and Labor Knesset faction Monday, insisted that the basis for a continued partnership with Likud has been smashed and the only course for Labor is to end it.

Shamir warned Labor on Sunday that to end the present government would kill all hope for progress in the peace initiative. He also maintained that in new elections, Likud would fare much better than Labor.

Won't Serve As 'Fig Leaf' For Likud

But Peres disputed that prognosis. He declared that Labor could not agree to "serve as a fig leaf for Likud's double talk" about the peace process.

"We will not be the chazzan (cantor) singing El Moleh Rachamim (a prayer for the dead) over the grave of the peace process," Peres said.

He presented the leadership bureau with the text of a letter he intended to send Shamir, in which he accused the prime minister of preferring "internal peace within your party to peace" between Israel and the Arabs.

Rabin, who was co-author with Shamir of the original peace initiative, said Labor now must come up with fair and realistic peace proposals of its own.

Rabin said that the Central Committee should state unequivocally that Labor is ready to:

- negotiate with local Palestinians, without preconditions, on how to conduct the election of Palestinian representatives for peace talks with Israel;
- accept from Egypt a proposed list of local Palestinians with whom Israel could begin preliminary talks immediately;
- implement the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force to specified security locations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during a five-year interim period of self-rule in the territories;
- include Palestinians from outside the territories in negotiations for a permanent settlement.

Labor also subscribes to the principle of trading territory for peace, Rabin said. And Peres said the party should be willing to have observers from friendly countries monitor the Palestinian elections.

These positions differ sharply with the personal views of Shamir and the stance adopted by the Likud Central Committee last week.

The party voted to prevent Palestinian elections from taking place until the uprising comes to a complete halt and to bar Arab residents of East Jerusalem, not to mention Palestinians from outside the territories, from participating in the elections.

'We've Got Our Own Conditions, Too'

Shamir has long opposed further territorial compromise and appears unwilling to consider the possibility of outside observers.

Rabin said that demanding an end to the intifada before peace talks can take place in effect "castrates the whole initiative."

The defense minister said that Likud and Labor had managed to put together a credible first-phase peace initiative precisely by consigning deeply disputed issues to a second phase, which need not be settled immediately.

But Likud changed all of that last week by placing new, unequivocal conditions on the character of a final settlement, he said.

"Let us tell the public that Likud is not the only one with conditions. We've got our own

conditions, too," Rabin declared to the obvious appreciation of his audience.

As a result of its Executive's decision Monday, Labor's Knesset faction decided to absent itself en bloc from the chamber later Monday, during a vote on six opposition motions of no-confidence in the government.

The Likud and small coalition parties were able to defeat the motions, which stemmed from the Likud Central Committee actions.

U.S. Jews Contact Israeli Leaders

Labor could not very well vote against the government of which it is part. But "we can hardly vote in favor of the government when the issue is the resolutions over which we have decided to leave the government," explained Haim Ramon, chairman of Labor's Knesset faction.

During floor debate on the motions, Likud's Ronni Milo, speaking for the government as minister of environmental protection, pleaded with Labor not to leave the unity government.

He warned that the public does not want new Israeli elections now, and that they would harm the economy.

American Jewish leaders also appeared to hope that new elections would be averted.

In New York, the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said he had been in touch with "Israeli leadership" and reminded them of the importance of presenting a unified approach to Washington.

"We were careful not to involve ourselves in Israeli party politics," said Seymour Reich, "but we reminded them that the last time there was great turmoil in Israeli political atmospherics, as a result of the November elections, the U.S. began its dialogue" with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In order to maintain unity, said Reich, "the prime minister has to achieve some formulation to assure Labor that the peace initiative is intact."

(JTA staff writer Andrew Silow Carroll in New York contributed to this report.)

SENIOR U.S. TEAM GOING TO ISRAEL TO CLARIFY STANCE ON PEACE PLAN By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, July 10 (JTA) -- The Bush administration plans to send some of the State Department's top guns to Israel next week in the hope of resuscitating the deteriorating prospects for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's peace initiative.

Reports from Israel said the U.S. delegation would be headed by Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and would include Dennis Ross, director of the State Department's policy-planning staff, and John Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.

But State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday that, while Eagleburger may head the U.S. delegation, there has been no final decision yet.

Secretary of State James Baker, at a news conference Monday in Warsaw, also said he is sending "someone" to Israel to clarify Israel's position on the proposed Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Baker said that Shamir's decision, under pressure from his Likud bloc, to put tough new conditions on the elections plan "give rise in our minds to the question about the seriousness of

purpose" of the Israeli government.

Clarification is needed "if we are to continue to support" the plan, he said.

The United States has been trying to sell the Israeli proposal to the Palestinians. But it has indicated that this will be an impossible task if Shamir seeks to impose the conditions he accepted at a July 5 Likud Central Committee meeting.

They are that Israel will never give up any territory, that Jewish settlement in the territories will continue, that Arab residents of East Jerusalem will not be allowed to participate in the elections and that the elections cannot be held until the uprising stops completely.

No Comment On Arafat Remarks

Baker told reporters Saturday that if the elections proposal bogs down, "then we would have to look a little more closely at the prospects for an international conference."

Such a conference is anathema to Shamir, who proposed the elections plan as an alternative to a peace conference.

The new conditions are also opposed by Israel's Labor Party, whose leaders voted Monday to recommend that the party withdraw from the government coalition with Likud.

The United States does not "get involved in Israeli politics," Boucher said when asked about the Labor move.

But the U.S. delegation is expected to press Shamir to restate his original peace proposal, in the hope that might prevent a Labor walkout.

Boucher said he had no comment about statements Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat made in an interview with The New York Times, published Monday.

Arafat was quoted as saying "the Likud decision means a deadly blow to elections, no matter what the cosmetic fixes they try to put on it now."

While Israel refuses any role for the PLO in negotiations, the United States has been trying in its dialogue with PLO representatives in Tunis to get the organization to back the elections plan.

The Times story said that Arafat repeatedly said that the United States had failed to fulfill its part of a secret agreement with the PLO. Boucher said he did not know what Arafat was talking about.

Arafat indicated that he might end the dialogue with the United States, unless more substantive matters were discussed. Boucher said that the United States engaged in the dialogue in order to advance the peace process.

IDF PUTS UPRISING DEATH TOLL AT 417 By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 10 (JTA) -- Israeli security forces have killed 417 Arabs and wounded nearly 7,000 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the Palestinian uprising began 19 months ago, an Israel Defense Force spokesman reported Monday.

But other sources have reported a higher number of fatalities.

The Israel Center for Human Rights said 486 Palestinians were killed, but its figure takes into account those killed by Israeli civilians.

The center's total is up to date as of Sunday, when two Palestinians were shot to death in the West Bank. The IDF's figures cover the period ending July 4.

The IDF put the number of Palestinians injured through July 4 at 6,912.

BEGIN EMERGES FROM SECLUSION TO CONDEMN ANTI-ARAB REPRISALS

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, July 10 (JTA) -- Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin emerged from seclusion Sunday to add his voice to those of current Israeli leaders condemning the random violence against Arabs that has broken out since the July 6 bus disaster that claimed 14 lives and injured 27.

There have been numerous reports of attacks against Arab civilians in Israel and the administered territories, since the July 6 incident, when an Arab from the Gaza Strip seized the steering wheel of an Egged passenger bus, forcing the vehicle to topple into a ravine, where it caught fire.

Police reported Sunday night that 27 Israelis had been arrested for revenge assaults on Arabs.

Begin, 75, has been a virtual recluse since his surprise resignation in 1983. Although sought out constantly by the media, he rarely makes public statements.

But the former leader of Likud and its hard-line Herut faction told Israel Television Sunday night that while the "abhorrent crime" shocked every Israeli, violent reactions will only deepen the hatred between Jews and Arabs.

Begin did not appear on the screen. His statement was read by his spokesman and confidant, Yehiel Kadishai.

President Chaim Herzog issued a similar appeal for restraint when he spoke Sunday at the funeral of Moshe Kol, a former Cabinet minister and one of the signers of Israel's Declaration of Independence. Kol died Saturday at the age of 87.

Herzog warned that violence breeds violence and fanatical racism causes endless hatred and enmity.

Shamir Apologizes To Arabs

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir also condemned the attacks on Arabs.

Interviewed Sunday for Israel Television's Arabic-language program, Shamir said, "I am sorry for the attacks. These are irresponsible acts that do not help anyone, bring chaos to our land and do not hurt the Arabs in the end anyway."

The violence appeared to be fading by Monday. On Sunday afternoon, mounted police charged stone-throwing Israelis who rioted at the funeral of one of the bus victims, Moshe Shapiro, 74.

The mob, chanting "death to Arabs," was dispersed by the police, who made 11 arrests.

One anti-Arab reprisal that may have further repercussions occurred Saturday on the beach at Caesarea.

Several Jewish roughnecks attacked and severely beat three Israeli Arabs from Baka al-Gharbiya. According to witnesses, a border police unit at the beach observed the attack, but did nothing to stop it.

Police announced late Sunday night that four residents of Or Akiva were suspects. Or Akiva, a development town adjacent to the affluent township of Caesarea, is a hotbed of right-wing militants.

Knesset member Yossi Sarid of the left-wing Citizens Rights Movement sent a telegram Sunday to Police Commissioner David Kraus, demanding an immediate investigation of the border police officers who failed to rescue the Arabs under attack.

LAST 2 VICTIMS OF BUS ATTACK ARE IDENTIFIED AS ISRAELIS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 10 (JTA) -- The last two victims of the July 6 bus disaster, which claimed 14 lives, were identified Monday by the government's Forensic Medical Center.

The badly charred bodies belonged to Nachum Mizrahi of Tel Aviv and Emil Grobman, a recent emigrant from the Soviet Union who lived in Jerusalem.

Grobman, 53, arrived in Israel in 1987 and lived at the Canada House immigrant absorption center in the Talpilot section of Jerusalem.

He had problems finding employment in his field, computer programming, and had been in Tel Aviv for job interviews on the day of the bus disaster.

Grobman was one of the 42 passengers on the No. 405 Egged bus when an Arab passenger grabbed and twisted the wheel, hurling the vehicle hundreds of feet down a rocky hillside, where it burst into flames.

The Arab responsible for the attack was injured and remained hospitalized in a prison facility. He has been identified as Abdul al-Khadi Suleiman Ghneim, 25, a resident of the Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

The authorities are investigating his possible connection with Islamic Jihad, a Moslem fundamentalist organization whose name translates as "Holy War."

WEST BANK SETTLEMENT BARS ARABS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 10 (JTA) -- Arabs have been barred from entering Sha'arei Tikva, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank where one of the victims of last week's attack on an Israeli passenger bus lived.

The settlement's security officer, Danny Abstr, said the decision taken Sunday was a security precaution. It applies to Arabs working in the settlement as well as local Arab residents.

About 80 Arab day laborers are employed in construction work and gardening at the settlement. The few who showed up for work Monday, in defiance of a Palestinian general strike, were turned away by guards.

Sha'arei Tikva was the home of Mordechai Rosenberg, one of 14 passengers killed July 6, when an Arab forced an Egged bus to crash down a hillside and burst into flames.

INFILTRATORS THWARTED IN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 10 (JTA) -- Three Palestinian terrorists attempting to infiltrate Israel through the border security zone in southern Lebanon were killed Monday in a clash with the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army.

There were no SLA casualties in the clash, which occurred just north of the Israeli-controlled security zone.

Following the incident, Israel Defense Force infantry conducted a large-scale search operation north of the security zone, with armored and air support.

The operation was intended to root out terrorists from the region. A number of Lebanese villagers were detained and brought to Israel for questioning.

WJC OPENS AN OFFICE IN BUDAPEST, MAKING FIRST INROAD IN EAST BLOC

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, July 10 (JTA) -- On the eve of President Bush's arrival in Hungary, the World Jewish Congress inaugurated an office in Budapest on Monday, the international Jewish organization's first bureau in an Eastern bloc country.

The ceremonies, broadcast live on Hungarian television, were held in the presence of representatives of the Jewish community, the media and the government.

"Hungarian officials have told us that Budapest has displaced Vienna as the window to the East, and they want to demonstrate this now by emphasizing their relations with the Western world, and more particularly with the Jewish world," WJC Executive Director Elan Steinberg said in a telephone interview following the ceremony.

The WJC office, located in the Pest half of the capital city, is situated on the second floor of MOK, the Central Board of Hungarian Jews, adjacent to the Jewish museum.

It is part of the Hungarian Jewish headquarters, housed in an old building with tile floors and arches surrounding a central courtyard. Synagogues, Jewish schools and now two kosher restaurants are within or adjacent to the complex.

The bureau, which already has five full-time employees, will also house the offices of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Mendel Kaplan, who holds the dual positions of chairman of the Jewish Agency and treasurer of the WJC, was present, joining WJC President Edgar Bronfman in the bureau's inauguration.

As part of the ceremony, a mezuzah was affixed to the doorpost by WJC Vice President Isi Leibler of Melbourne, Australia, who last placed the Jewish symbol on the doorpost of the Solomon Mikhoels Cultural Center in Moscow.

Hungarian Minister Admits 'Guilt'

Some 300 people who crowded into the auditorium for the ceremonies were addressed by Dr. Alfred Schoener, chief rabbi of Hungary and a member of Parliament. Five government ministers were present at the opening, representing the Ministries of Culture, Cults (Religion), Foreign Trade and Tourism, and the office of Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth.

But what was "the most extraordinary," said Steinberg, was the address given by the official speaker, Minister of Culture Ferenc Glatz, a non-Jew, who said, "Hungary is guilty for not having done enough for its Jewish community."

Steinberg added that Glatz pledged Hungary's "full commitment toward redressing that role."

After the ceremony, WJC officials Bronfman, Singer and Steinberg dined with Nemeth and Politburo member Imre Pozsgay.

Another notable presence at Monday's ceremonies was that of Israeli diplomatic representative Shlomo Marom, who made his first official public remarks since arriving in Budapest 15 months ago to head the Israeli interests section.

Marom works at the former Israeli Embassy building. Budapest severed relations with Israel in 1967, following the Six-Day War.

During the next two days, Bronfman will be meeting with government officials to discuss the opening of formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

There are already several direct flights each week between Budapest and Tel Aviv.

SKINHEAD ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF DEFACING TORONTO SYNAGOGUE

By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, July 10 (JTA) -- A 21-year-old skinhead and a young woman, apparently his girlfriend, were arrested here in connection with the June 11 desecration of a suburban Toronto synagogue.

Zvonimir Lelas and Elizabeth Major, 20, were charged with malicious mischief following a police investigation that led to their arrest.

Lelas is also charged with two counts of mischief for defacing a Hebrew school, Yeshiva Yeshodei Yeshurun, near the Shaarei Shomayim synagogue.

The synagogue itself was spray-painted with 3-foot-high swastikas and racist slogans, such as "White Power."

The sidewalk in front of the synagogue was painted with a red swastika and the slogan "Smash ZOG," which stands for "Zionist Occupation Government."

The Canadian Jewish Congress described the vandalism as "the most serious incident of its kind in Canada" since the end of World War II.

The CJC initially offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators. With the help of other organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish, it was increased to \$25,000.

Police credited the CJC with providing information that led to the arrests of Lelas and Major.

U.S. SETS MORE MACCABIAH RECORDS

RAMAT GAN, Israel, July 10 (JTA) -- U.S. Olympic hammer-thrower Ken Flax set new Maccabiah records here Sunday with each of three consecutive throws, outdistancing the competition at the Jewish Olympic-style tournament.

The last throw soared 78.06 meters, more than 257 feet, to the cheers of American and Israeli athletes and spectators attending the 13th Maccabiah at the Ramat Gan Stadium.

Flax, a native of California, competed in the 1988 summer Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, and expects to participate in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain.

At 26, he considers himself "young for my event."

Elsewhere at the Maccabiah, pitcher Dave Blackburn two-hit Canada in a 4-0 victory for the undefeated U.S. softball team. He has yet to yield a run in the Maccabiah.

The American swimming team continued to dominate the aquatic competition. It set three Maccabiah records while earning five gold medals Sunday.

Ron Aronberg shattered his own 1985 record in the 400-meter freestyle. Keith Kaplan added the 50-meter freestyle gold medal to the 100-meter competition he won Friday.

The U.S. basketball team remained undefeated with a 115-79 win over Britain. But Israel defeated the United States 14-9 in the water polo finals.

Kathy Jones successfully defended her karate title, while the American team earned a silver medal.

The U.S. soccer team took Argentina into overtime before losing 1-0.

Britain defeated the United States in rugby by a score of 24-3.