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**SHAMIR'S CRITICS IN LIKUD ATTACK
HANDLING OF EZER WEIZMAN SHOWDOWN**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir may have saved the Likud-Labor unity coalition government by allowing Ezer Weizman to stay in the Cabinet.

But his compromise with the errant Laborite has aroused the wrath of his chief rivals in the Likud bloc, Ministers Ariel Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Moda'i.

They were among the first to congratulate the prime minister for toughness after he summarily fired Weizman at the Dec. 31 Cabinet meeting, for allegedly maintaining contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But now they are heaping scorn on the 11th-hour deal made Tuesday. Weizman agreed to resign from the prestigious, policy-making Inner Cabinet of 12 senior ministers.

He will, however, retain his Cabinet portfolio as minister of science and development, which has little influence on affairs of state.

The compromise allowed Vice Premier Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the two senior Labor ministers, to save face. Neither they nor their colleagues wanted to break up the government over the firing of Weizman, a political maverick who is not considered to have much of a popular following.

But Peres could hardly have ignored Shamir's violation of the coalition agreement, which states that the prime minister cannot dismiss a Labor minister without the consent of the vice premier.

A number of political analysts viewed the compromise as strengthening Shamir and further weakening Labor.

Ended With A 'Scandal'

But according to Levy, a deputy premier who is minister of construction and housing, Shamir's compromise was a serious blow to Likud. It gave Labor a "recipe" to beat Likud in the future, he charged.

Levy stressed that he and his associates were not parties to that "unfortunate compromise," adding that what began "like a drama" ended "with a scandal."

That is symptomatic of a situation in which part of the Likud's leadership has not been privy to information and decisions, he said.

Sharon, the fiery minister of industry and trade, contended that Shamir's handling of the Weizman crisis gave legitimacy to the PLO. He said it exposed "a weak performance under pressure" by the prime minister and a flawed decision-making process.

Sharon, Levy and Moda'i, who is minister of economics and planning, met Thursday to discuss the situation. They decided to try again to convene the Likud Central Committee to impose constraints on Shamir's conduct of foreign policy, especially his peace initiative, which the three ministers oppose.

The Prime Minister's Office said the critics failed to appreciate that Weizman is no longer in the Inner Cabinet and that a clear message was sent to the world that Israel will never negotiate with the PLO.

**JEWISH GROUPS LOBBYING WHITE HOUSE
TO REVIVE PANAMA'S BATTERED ECONOMY**
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- American Jewish organizations are urging the White House and the Congress to work actively to repair and rebuild the battered economy of Panama.

The business community, in which the 5,000 Jews of Panama play a major role, was not only hit hard by the widespread looting following the recent U.S. invasion, but has suffered from the U.S. sanctions imposed during the latter years of the regime of deposed Gen. Manuel Noriega.

According to those who have been in touch with the Jews in Panama, the panic that existed during the first days of the U.S. invasion, when Noriega's "Dignity Battalions" rampaged through stores and neighborhoods, has now abated.

With Noriega now in U.S. custody, and the new Panamanian government tentatively in place, concern among Jews there has shifted from ensuring their physical safety to rebuilding their businesses and their lives.

With Jews owning well more than half of all Panamanian businesses, American Jewish leaders believe that the success and stability of Panama's Jews is inextricably tied to the strength of the country's economy as a whole.

With that in mind, Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations, sent a letter to President Bush this week supporting U.S. economic assistance to Panama.

Jewish Merchants Impacted

In addition, letters signed by six major American Jewish groups favoring the development of "a comprehensive U.S. program of assistance designed to rebuild the Panamanian economy" were hand-delivered Thursday to Vice President Dan Quayle and White House Chief of Staff John Sununu by representatives of the American Jewish Committee.

Ira Silverman, AJCommittee's executive vice president, and David Harris, the organization's Washington representative, conveyed the letters during previously scheduled meetings with Quayle and Sununu.

In those meetings, "we made clear that our interest was universal, but stemmed from the fact that the Jewish community was disproportionately represented in the merchant class," Silverman said in a telephone interview Thursday.

A similar letter was sent to House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), who is leading a congressional mission to Panama to determine how the United States can best assist the country.

The letters were written under the auspices of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and were signed by leaders of AJCommittee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith International and the Council of Jewish Federations.

Jewish leaders maintained that the letters stemmed from concern for the welfare of both the Jews and the entire country.

"The two are intimately intertwined," said

Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, director of Latin American affairs for ADL. "If there is a Jewish merchant with a store of 50 employees and there is an economic resurgence, the merchant will do well and his employees will do well."

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said his organization has also had contacts with State Department officials and members of Congress.

The WJC has suggested to American leaders that aid could be given to Panamanian businesses in the same way that aid was extended to the Dominican Republic after the April 1965 invasion by U.S. Marines there.

At that time, Dominican businesses faced a similar problem to that faced now by those in Panama: Their insurance companies did not compensate them for damages, claiming they were not insured for an act of war.

The United States chose to guarantee money to the insurance companies, which in turn, were able to bail out the Dominican businesses.

Steinberg said he had not gotten a specific response to his proposal, but that he was "cautiously optimistic."

Despite the amount of political activity relating to Panama by Jewish organizations, B'nai B'rith International is the only group that has chosen to offer direct assistance, by initiating an "open mailbox" for donations.

Officials from American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the United Jewish Appeal's traditional channel for assistance to Jewish communities overseas, determined that the agency's help was "not needed" at this time, according to JDC spokesman Amir Shaviv.

JDC made the decision after contacting a number of other Jewish agencies, including B'nai B'rith.

ISRAELI POLL: TALK WITH PLO INEVITABLE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- Israelis, by a 50 to 37 percent margin, believe their country eventually will have to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization, according to a poll published here Thursday.

The 1,000 respondents, representing a sampling of the urban Jewish population, were polled at the beginning of December 1989 by Dr. Avraham Diskin of the Hebrew University's political science department.

Asked if they believed that ultimately Israel will have to negotiate with the PLO, 15 percent said "definitely yes," 35 percent said "yes" and 12 percent said "perhaps."

Among those who thought otherwise, 22 percent answered "no" and 15 percent "definitely no."

IDF SCARES OFF TWO INFILTRATORS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- An Israel Defense Force patrol opened fire Thursday on two potential infiltrators from Jordan, apparently hitting one of them. Both infiltrators got away, and there were no Israeli casualties.

It was the second incident this week near the Jordanian border.

According to the IDF, the patrol spotted two suspected infiltrators approaching the border fence from the Jordanian side near Kibbutz Gesher, in the Upper Jordan Valley.

The soldiers fired warning shots over the heads of the men, and when these were ignored, aimed lower.

Jordanian troops were later seen apparently conducting an investigation on their side of the line.

Last Sunday night, an IDF patrol came under fire from across the Jordanian border near El-Hamma, south of the Beit She'an Valley. There were no casualties.

A subsequent search yielded no clue to the identity of the assailants.

ISRAELI: PRESS HAS TOO MUCH FREEDOM, AND GIVES TOO MUCH NEWS ON INTIFADA

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- In struggling for the free flow of information about the intifada, the Israeli press faces not only military censorship but opposition from large segments of the public, who believe the less news, the better for national security.

"One talks about the public's right to know," said Hanna Zemer, editor of the newspaper Davar. "But it turned out that most of the public does not want to know," she said at a Tel Aviv University symposium Monday.

"The public likes exposure of senior officials and leaders, but the public does not like to expose itself," Zemer added.

Professor Ephraim Ya'ar, dean of the social sciences faculty at Tel Aviv University, said recent surveys show that more than half the population believes the press has too much freedom in Israel.

More than 60 percent believe that expanded press freedom is harmful to the security of the state, said Ya'ar, who attributed much of that feeling to weariness with news from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But the news media, local and foreign, are constantly demanding more information from the territories, regardless of diminished international interest in the intifada.

The Israel Defense Force, meanwhile, considers itself caught between the conflicting responsibilities of keeping the media informed and preserving security.

IDF spokesman Nahman Shai told the symposium that press freedom has not been curtailed since the Palestinian uprising started more than two years ago.

He said that, frequent criticism notwithstanding, the army insists that the information it feeds the media is accurate and reliable.

The critics have said the army fails to give an accurate update of events, especially in comparison with Arab sources, whose information has gained credibility with the media since the intifada began.

3.5 MILLION PASS THROUGH BEN-GURION

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- More than 3.5 million passengers passed through Ben-Gurion Airport in 1989, according to statistics published by the Israel Airports Authority this week.

The number of passengers entering Israel exceeded 1.749 million, compared with 1.646 million in 1988.

More than 1.770 million passengers left Israel via Ben-Gurion Airport in 1989, compared with 1.660 million the previous year.

DESPITE A LACK OF GERMAN JEWS, ANTI-SEMITISM STILL FLOURISHES

By David Kantor

EAST BERLIN, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- The end of 40 years of Communist domination in East Germany seems to have unleashed a wave of anti-Semitic incidents out of proportion to the size of the organized Jewish community, which numbers no more than 400 in a population of 16.6 million.

Anti-Jewish slogans and swastikas have been daubed on walls in several towns with few or no Jews, the official news agency ADN reported.

In Goerlitz, walls were painted with "Juden Raus" (Jews Out) and "Foreigners Raus." In addition, a memorial to Nazi persecutees was desecrated.

In Pirna, near Dresden, some shop windows were daubed with the slogan "We Are Here -- Rep," a reference to West Germany's neo-Nazi Republican Party.

In Erfurt, police on Monday arrested several Skinheads, extreme right-wing youths with shaven heads who were threatening passers-by with clubs and other weapons.

Some observers question how anti-Semitism can survive in a country with so few Jews.

Sometimes the graffiti is aimed at political figures who are of Jewish origin, though not affiliated with the Jewish community.

A slogan in Dresden recently denounced the "Jewish Communist" Gregor Gysi, the new boss of the East German Communist Party, known as SED.

Despised Among East Germans

Ehrhart Neubert, a leader of the opposition faction called Demokratischer Aufbruch, claimed that neo-Nazi violence was caused largely by the former Communist dictatorship, which had refused to admit anti-Semitism existed in the German Democratic Republic.

Joachim Guck of New Forum, a leading opposition party, maintained that exaggerated reporting of neo-Nazi activity helps the SED, which pictures itself as the only party capable of saving the country from right-wing extremists.

Konrad Weiss of the opposition Democracy Now, who has done research on right-wing extremists in East Germany, concluded that most of them are youths who came from families of Communist functionaries and former employees of Stasi, the now defunct internal security service.

The Munich-based Republicans, who have had unexpected electoral successes in the past year, are clearly the most dangerous because of their newly won prestige.

Their leader, former Waffen SS officer Franz Schoenhuber, recently boasted that his party has established branches in most major towns in East Germany.

The East German authorities said last week that they knew of no such branches, though the party may have the support of some citizens.

Meanwhile, 71 neo-Nazis planning to cross into East Germany were arrested New Year's Eve and detained briefly in the West German border town of Hilders.

They were accused of violating the ban on their traditional New Year's party, which always ends in clashes with the police and anti-Nazi protesters.

In the nearby West German city of Fulda, the local authorities identified them as the "Wiking Jugend" (Viking Youth), a neo-Nazi youth group.

KLANWATCH REPORT CALLS SKINHEADS 'DOMESTIC TERRORISTS OF THE 1990s'

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- Racist Skinheads could be "the domestic terrorists of the 1990s," according to a report on their activity by Klanwatch, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Montgomery, Ala., center, a legal service whose Klanwatch Project monitors racist activity, says that the violent, racist Skinheads have contributed to an upsurge in hate crimes in this country that points to their being considered terrorists.

"Skinheads were considered the radical upstarts of the 1980s, but they are on their way to becoming the domestic terrorists of the 1990s," Morris Dees, center director, said at a news conference last month announcing the report.

The 46-page report, "Hate Violence and White Supremacy: A Decade Review, 1980-1990," includes sketches of the prominent leaders of the hate movement and a chronicle of attacks and threats during the 1980s. More than half the incidents took place in the last two years.

The report holds the Skinheads to be "the most violent group of white supremacists this country has seen in a quarter century."

"Unobstructed by conscience or caution, they hold hatred as their only ideology and violence as their only tactic," it warns.

The report cautions that it is necessary to reverse the past's "simplistic view that hate violence is merely a crime problem," and embark on "the more difficult task of counteracting the message of hatred spread by white supremacists."

The study indicates that Skinheads and other racist groups are strengthened by their new, easy access to mass media, such as cable television.

Success Inside Prisons

Extremist groups have also had success inside prisons, where new hate-filled groups have burgeoned, even as the traditional Ku Klux Klan has waned, the report says.

The exhaustive report, including chilling descriptions of paramilitary training and assaults, identified 230 organized hate groups in the country, including Skinheads, various Klan factions, assorted neo-Nazis, the Christian Identity movement and the Posse Comitatus.

The West Coast, from Southern California to the northernmost part of Washington, abounds most in the concentration of hate groups.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's most recent case is the first civil suit against Skinheads in connection with a racial killing. It has been filed on behalf of relatives of an Ethiopian man who was beaten to death in November 1988 in Portland by Skinheads.

The charges of wrongful death and racial intimidation are filed against Skinheads Kenneth Mieske and Kyle Brewster; against both Tom and John Metzger of Fallbrook, Calif., leaders of the White Aryan Resistance; and against WAR itself.

The Metzgers, who are father and son, were charged individually and as leaders of WAR.

The complaint, filed jointly with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, claims the Skinheads were influenced in their behavior by the Metzgers.

It also details contacts made by the Metzgers and the Skinheads, who are members of a group calling itself East Side White Pride.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

**FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL
BELIED ROMANIAN ANTI-SEMITISM**

By Robert Leiter
Jewish Exponent

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 4 (JTA) -- Despite Romania's friendly relations with Israel, vicious anti-Semitism was a standard component of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's Communist regime, according to a Romanian-born scholar here.

Unlike other Eastern European countries, Romania never broke diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six-Day War of 1967. But according to Vladimir Tismaneanu, resident scholar at Philadelphia's Foreign Policy Research Institute, the true nature of the Ceausescu regime was masked by this amicable veneer.

"Ceausescu played and manipulated the nationalist card whenever it was good for him," Tismaneanu said in an interview.

"He always said he never knew about anti-Semitic statements or writings. But in such a tightly run country as Romania, this would have been impossible. In fact, Ceausescu's brother Ilie was one of the most vocal proponents of anti-Semitism."

"The more isolated (Nicolae) Ceausescu became from the true intellectuals in Romania," Tismaneanu continued, "the more he was held hostage by the worst nationalist and anti-Semitic elements in the country."

Tismaneanu was one of several Romanian Jewish emigres now living in the Philadelphia area who spoke recently about the massive changes in their native country, expressing optimism for the future of Romanian Jewry.

Millions Paid For Jews

Israel's relations with the recently deposed and executed Ceausescu have been much in the news recently. According to reports circulated widely in the U.S. media and confirmed by Israeli officials, Israel paid the hard-line Communist dictator millions of dollars for permitting hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews to emigrate.

"Any relationship with a tyrant is a dirty business," Romanian Jewish emigre Val Breazu-Tannen said, responding to printed reports this week of Israel's payments.

"But why should Israel feel ashamed of what they did (to save Jewish lives)? Ceausescu was not really a friend of the Jews."

"What were his motives? They were of the lowest kind. He used Jews. He bought and sold them.

According to Breazu-Tannen, Ceausescu was reported to have said that Romania has three national resources: Germans, Jews and oil.

"He said he would sell all three things and make lots of money," Breazu-Tannen said. "But he sold only certain Jews. He wouldn't sell Jews who were opposed to him. He cracked down on them, sent them to jail."

Breazu-Tannen, who teaches computer science at the University of Pennsylvania, insisted that Israel "must come completely clean with the whole story" about its dealings with Ceausescu.

"If they leave a mystery, people will think there was more going on than there really was," he said.

Despite Romania's history of anti-Semitism, Tismaneanu, who left his homeland in 1981, and Breazu-Tannen, who left a year later, are optimistic about the future for Romanian Jewry.

"I have a sister still living in Romania. I've spoken to her at length since the collapse of the Ceausescu regime," Tismaneanu said.

"Anti-Semitism is simply not the case with the younger generation of intellectuals. They are pro-Western, and anti-Semitic rhetoric holds no credence with them."

But one factor that might prove troublesome for the Jews, Tismaneanu said, is their ties to the Communist past in Romania. Many Jews were active in the party in the 1950s and in the secret police, he said.

'Dream After A Terrible Nightmare'

"For intellectuals in Romania," the scholar said, the Communists of the 1950s "are not representative of the Jewish population. It is understood that they were in the party not as Jews, but as self-hating Jews. Jews have not been seen in Romania as pro-Communist."

Tismaneanu said that accusations of Jewish ties to communism will be balanced by disclosures about the Communist regime's anti-Zionism. The scholar spoke of two show trials, one in 1958 and another in the early 1960s, in which Jews were framed and some executed for their relations with Israel.

Tismaneanu, who recently spoke by phone for more than three hours with his sister in Romania, described her mood as "euphoric and ecstatic."

She applied to go to Israel two years ago, but was told that because of her brother's anti-Ceausescu activities, she would never leave.

"Now she doesn't know if she even wants to leave," Tismaneanu said. "She says it's like a dream after a terrible nightmare."

"There's no reason to be gloomy," the scholar said. "The gloomy period is behind us, for Romanians and Jews alike."

Another Romanian exile, Don Stern, manager of technical training for a corporation in New Jersey and a teacher of data communications at Villanova University, left Romania in 1980.

An uncle of Stern's still lives in Romania and works as an administrator for Chief Rabbi Moshe Rosen.

Many Jews In New Regime

"I spoke with him the very first morning after Ceausescu fled," Stern said. "He was crying on the phone. I talked with him for 15 minutes. We had to talk in coded speech, but I found out he's all right."

Stern, like his fellow Romanian emigres, does not believe that the Romanian people will use Jews as targets. He said most of the 20,000 Jews left in Romania are, like his uncle, elderly.

"There is always a possibility that the remnants of the Communist Party will blame anything they want to on anyone they want," Stern said. "There are always opportunists. But I don't think the Romanians will resort to this."

Stern said he was surprised to learn from news reports that several Jews are in the new government. The new prime minister, Petre Roman, had a Jewish father, but reportedly does not consider himself Jewish.

Stern, like the others, is optimistic about Romania's future.

"I'm inclined to say that the (political) transformation (in Romania) is 10 times as profound as the others in Eastern Europe. The Romanian people were in a high-pressure cooker. It's difficult to put the lid back on once it's off."