

VOL. 68 - 73rd YEAR
WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 1990
NO. 81

SHAMIR GAINING SUPPORT IN EFFORT TO FORM A RIGHT-WING GOVERNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 1 (JTA) -- Yitzhak Shamir's chances of forming a narrow government dominated by the conservative Likud bloc and its right-wing allies appeared to improve this week.

Shamir, who has been caretaker prime minister since the national unity government collapsed March 15, exuded confidence that he would be able to wrap up a new coalition swiftly, possibly by the end of next week.

Shamir received his mandate to form a government from President Chaim Herzog last Friday, after Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, who had tried for 36 days, conceded failure.

Political pundits are already speculating over the composition of Shamir's Cabinet.

They predict David Levy will be the next foreign minister, replacing Moshe Arens, who will become defense minister.

Ariel Sharon is reportedly being considered for minister of construction and housing, the portfolio held by Levy in the outgoing government. Or he might be designated minister of industry and trade, the portfolio he held before he quit the government in February.

Yitzhak Moda'i, who defected from Likud to set up a separate Knesset faction, will be back in the fold as finance minister. He had been minister of economics and planning in the previous government.

With Levy, Sharon and Moda'i, Shamir will again have in his Cabinet the three outspoken hard-liners who were the most scathing critics of his peace diplomacy.

Moledet Leader Seeking Police Post

Sharon has the potential to cause particular trouble, since he openly covets the defense portfolio. Some observers say he will not accept anything less, even if offered mollification with the rank of deputy premier.

According to political observers, Shamir would very much like to include some of the brightest of Likud's younger generation in his Cabinet. But his commitments leave little room.

The prime minister has himself mentioned Benny Begin, son of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and Binyamin Netanyahu, who has been deputy foreign minister. Both have been in the Knesset since 1988 and are no longer neophytes.

Also mentioned are Ronni Milo, Ehud Olmert, Dan Meridor and David Magen, who currently are members of the caretaker Cabinet, and two other young hopefuls, Eliahu Ben-Elissar and Yehoshua Matza.

But Shamir must reserve Cabinet seats for his probable coalition partners, which include the right-wing Tehiya, Tsomet and Moledet parties.

The Interior Ministry and two other portfolios are expected to go to the ultra-Orthodox Shas and Degel HaTorah parties.

Rafael Eitan of Tsomet is expected to be named minister of agriculture.

Rehavam Ze'evi of Moledet, a party that advocates the deportation of all Palestinians as part of a negotiated peace settlement, is known

to want the Police Ministry. He is considered unlikely to get it, but probably will sit in the next Cabinet, observers say.

Likud began formal talks with its various potential partners Tuesday. It believes it has lined up 61 votes, just enough to break the Knesset deadlock. It may have 62 if it succeeds in getting Laborite Efraim Gur to defect.

That is still a parlorly narrow margin. Likud would be more comfortable with a 65-vote parliamentary majority.

To achieve that, it must overcome the reluctance of the National Religious Party to support anything but a unity government, and it must pry the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael party loose from its coalition agreement with Labor.

Pundits believe Shamir can succeed in both those endeavors.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL ON CAPITOL HILL STILL STRONG, DESPITE RECENT TENSION

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 1 (JTA) -- Although there is growing concern in Congress over the direction Israel is taking in the peace process, this so far has not eroded the strong support for Israel on Capitol Hill, including the \$3 billion in military and economic aid Jerusalem receives each year.

This is the assessment of Washington representatives of Jewish organizations, all of whom believe that many of the present uncertainties may be solved when Israel has a government in place.

"I continue to find strong support for Israel," said Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Hordes said that while some on Capitol Hill have expressed distress over Israel's peace policy, they continue to support pro-Israel legislation. "Frankly, I have found that votes in support of foreign aid to Israel have increased," he added.

But Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the American Jewish Congress, said that while Israel will get its full aid for the 1991 fiscal year, he is not so sure about the future.

There is "increased discussion" and "increased unhappiness" about Israel in some quarters, he said, adding that "most of it comes from friends" of the Jewish state.

"Once we have a government in Israel that can govern, it will completely change the picture," Pelavin predicted.

David Harris, Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, also believes much depends on a government being assembled in Israel.

Concern Over Posturing By Shamir

He indicated the present coolness between the Bush administration and the caretaker government in Jerusalem is due to the posturing by Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir, who is trying to form a government with the smaller right-wing and religious parties.

"If bilateral relations remain strong and intact, I see no reason to expect diminution of

support for bread-and-butter issues, including foreign aid," Harris said.

But he warned that if the relationship goes downhill, "it could negatively affect attitudes."

Harris said that "questions are being asked, particularly about the nature of a new Israeli government and the course it will take."

While neither Harris nor the others were specific, concern is being raised by some in Congress that Shamir will form a right-wing government that might reject all U.S. proposals on the peace process.

Shamir lent credence to these fears by saying in an Independence Day address Monday that he saw no reason to accept Secretary of State James Baker's proposal for preliminary talks between Israel and a Palestinian delegation.

But Harris stressed the answer will only come in the next few weeks or months, "once the domestic politicking is over in Jerusalem."

The representatives rejected the view of Senate Minority leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) that foreign aid will become a major issue in this year's congressional elections, either from those who want to use the money for domestic aid or, like Dole, those who would take funds from Israel and other major recipients for the fledgling democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Not A Campaign Issue

"I don't yet see foreign aid as a looming issue which will make or break a candidate," Harris said. "Foreign aid is a minuscule percentage of the federal budget, by comparison with such issues as the savings-and-loan bailout or what the size of the defense budget ought to be."

When Dole first made his proposal to cut aid to Israel and four other countries by 5 percent, Jewish organizations replied that instead of decreasing aid for some, the overall aid budget should be enlarged to meet the new needs.

"A cogent argument can be made that a nation that has spent trillions of dollars to promote democracy and anti-communism can spend a few billion to reap the success of its national security policies," Harris said.

Pelavin of AJCongress said that foreign aid has never been an important issue in congressional elections, although it could be in a few races. He suggested that as the United States moves out of the Cold War and into a new relationship with the Soviet Union, there might be more emphasis on foreign aid rather than defense spending.

Hordes of ADL said foreign aid has never been a popular issue, but it also has never been a major campaign issue. "I don't expect it will be a greater issue than it has been in the past," he said.

But Hordes, like the others, suggested that "responsible leaders on the Hill will be looking for ways to reallocate money from defense to foreign aid."

DOLE SAYS HE DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND, BUT DEFENDS HIS RIGHT TO DISAGREE

OVERLAND PARK, Kan., May 1 (JTA) -- Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) says he is concerned he "may have offended my Jewish friends" by making remarks strongly critical of Israel and its steadfast supporters in the United States.

But, in an interview with the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, Dole maintained that "friends should be able to question and disagree."

"Maybe I didn't say it right. Maybe that's my problem," he told Stan Rose, the paper's publisher, in an interview published last Friday.

The Senate minority leader was asked about a recent interview he gave the Jerusalem Post, in which he accused American Jewish leaders of "selfishness," saying they "wouldn't give one penny" of U.S. foreign aid now going to Israel to any other country.

Dole said he was referring specifically to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pre-eminent pro-Israel lobby in Washington, and its executive director, Thomas Dine.

"I consider him a friend. But sometimes he comes on too strong," said the senator, who is famous for his own blunt speech.

"I can't see where cutting 5 percent off the aid we are giving to Israel should upset him so much," Dole said.

The senator was referring to the proposal he made earlier this year, in which he proposed a 5 percent across-the-board cut in U.S. economic assistance to Israel and the four other top recipients of American foreign aid.

Dole was asked in the interview whether he was "fronting" for President Bush by making such a proposal.

"Let's just say that we agree on certain things," he replied.

Israel Ought To 'Give A Little'

But he added, "Just because I advocate a cut in foreign aid to the five countries we aid most heavily so we can help the new democracies in Eastern Europe, it doesn't mean I am anti-Israel."

Israel, he said, "should be willing to give a little. I believe it would be good for Israel to do that in the eyes of the rest of the world."

The Republican leader has taken flack for some other of his recently articulated positions, including his opposition, after the fact, to a Senate resolution that declares united Jerusalem to be Israel's capital -- a resolution he co-sponsored and voted for before switching his position.

"I favor that, but I believe the timing for this resolution was terrible. It only inflamed an already sensitive situation," he told Rose.

The non-binding resolution adopted on March 22 was a response to a statement by Bush that seemed to question Israel's rights of sovereignty in Jerusalem.

The president said at a March 3 news conference that there should be no "new settlements in the West Bank or East Jerusalem."

Dole, who was in Israel from April 12 to 15 on a senatorial junket through the Middle East, also had some advice that many Israelis agree with.

"Israel ought to change its electoral system," he said. Personally he prefers Labor Party leader Shimon Peres over Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir to be the next prime minister, the senator admitted.

"But under Israel's political system, neither one can get anything done. When a 90-year-old rabbi from Brooklyn is able to dictate final decisions to the government of Israel, it's time for a change," Dole declared.

He was referring to reports that intervention by the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, frustrated Peres' attempts to establish a Labor-led coalition government.

The Lubavitch movement claims the 88-year-old rebbe made clear his views on the peace process, but did not instruct anyone how to vote.

JEW IN CHRISTIAN QUARTER CLAIM THEY'VE LEFT ST. JOHN'S HOSPICE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 1 (JTA) -- Jews who have been occupying a complex of buildings in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City claimed Tuesday that they have complied with a court order to evacuate the buildings, which are owned by the Greek Orthodox Church.

But while the firestorm of protests that erupted when 150 Jewish religious activists moved into St. John's Hospice on April 11 has simmered down, it has not died.

There was no independent confirmation Tuesday that the Jewish activists had actually fulfilled the terms set by the High Court of Justice last Thursday when it gave them until May 1 to vacate.

The activists, many of them students at the Ateret Cohanim and Mercatz Harav yeshivot, were ordered out pending a lower court's ruling on the validity of their lease, which they obtained through SBS, a Panamanian-registered company. The lease has been challenged by the Greek Orthodox Church.

The justices, nevertheless, allowed up to 20 representatives of the company to stay on for "maintenance and security" purposes.

According to Shmuel Evyatar, a spokesman for the Jews who occupied the building, most of the families departed over the weekend. But none was seen leaving, and since neither church representatives nor the news media were admitted to the buildings Tuesday, it was impossible to verify the number of people who remained.

Evyatar said a representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate would be permitted to enter "under agreement with the settlers, as is customary between a landlord and his tenants."

The Greek Church, however, does not recognize the Jewish group as its tenants. It maintains that the lease was fraudulently obtained from the legitimate tenant, an Armenian businessman who was paid \$3.5 million, about half of it supplied clandestinely by the Likud government.

14 More Settlements Proposed

The Jews made no secret that their intention was to establish a Jewish presence in the Christian Quarter of the Old City, which traditionally has been segregated according to religious faiths.

The move, which coincided with the holy days before Easter, drew worldwide condemnation, even from friends of Israel in the United States.

But defiance of world opinion and a drive to plant Jewish settlements in disputed areas apparently is considered politically advantageous by the Likud caretaker regime, which is courting the right-wing and the ultra-Orthodox parties to form a new governing coalition.

New provocation is expected from a massive ceremony planned by Jewish settlers for the installation of a Torah at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus on Thursday. Nablus is the largest Arab city in the West Bank and a focal point of the 28-month-old Palestinian uprising.

The ceremonies will be held under the protection of Israel Defense Force troops. Several right-wing Knesset members are expected to attend, and possibly the minister for religious affairs, Ze'evulun Hammer.

The Peace Now movement plans a protest demonstration nearby.

The impetus for Likud's settlement drive is

credited to Michael Dekel, an activist recently appointed adviser to the prime minister. With no dovish coalition partner to keep the settlement drive in check, Likud has given Dekel a free hand.

The settlement issue is high on the agenda of Likud's coalition talks with the far right. An understanding is believed to have been reached that a Likud-led regime will proceed immediately with 14 new settlements, approved by the former Likud-Labor coalition but never built.

They include one to be called Tirza, which was vetoed by former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin because of its proximity to Nablus.

MOSHE LEVINGER GETS FIVE MONTHS FOR NEGLIGENT SHOOTING OF ARAB

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 1 (JTA) -- Rabbi Moshe Levinger, militant leader of the Jewish settlement movement in Hebron, was sentenced by a Jerusalem District Court on Tuesday to five months in prison for negligently causing the death of a Palestinian shopkeeper 18 months ago.

He received an additional seven-month suspended sentence. The prosecutor had asked a minimum one-year term for the rabbi.

The sentence was the result of a plea bargain, in which Levinger admitted he had negligently fired his rifle in downtown Hebron, killing the shopkeeper and wounding a passerby.

Originally, he pleaded not guilty, claiming he was surrounded by stone-throwing Arabs and had fired into the air to frighten them off.

The prosecutor charged him with manslaughter, which carries a maximum 20-year prison term, but withdrew the charge.

Judge Shalom Brenner ruled Levinger had acted "hastily" and "uncontrolled" when he fired the fatal shot, and was not under attack from the direction in which he fired.

The judge rejected an appeal to allow Levinger to do public service in lieu of jail, but gave the rabbi a two-week reprieve before he starts serving his time.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, known as B'tselem, reported Tuesday that nine Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces last month.

Three were shot in the West Bank and six in the Gaza Strip.

Another Palestinian died by falling from a roof while being chased by security forces, and an 11th was apparently killed by a collaborator.

According to B'tselem, four of the dead were children, one of them 11 and the others between 13 and 16.

The organization, whose data has proven reliable, stressed that while Palestinian casualties in clashes with security forces have decreased, the fact that dozens were killed in recent months and hundreds wounded, "among them many children," was unacceptable.

According to B'tselem, 646 Palestinians were killed by security forces from December 1987, when the Palestinian uprising began, through April 1990. About 146 were children 16 and younger.

In the same period, 10 Israel Defense Force soldiers and nine civilians, three of them children, were killed by Palestinians, B'tselem said.

Eight Palestinians were murdered last month, apparently because they were suspected of collaborating with the Israeli authorities.

**LITHUANIA, IN INDEPENDENCE BID,
SEEKING RECOGNITION BY ISRAEL**

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, May 1 (JTA) -- Lithuania, which has found it easier to declare independence from the Soviet Union than to implement it, is seeking recognition by Israel.

An indirect offer of diplomatic ties from Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis was conveyed Monday to President Chaim Herzog on Israel's Independence Day.

It arrived by facsimile machine, along with telegrams from President Bush, Queen Elizabeth II of Britain and other heads of state, congratulating Israel on its 42nd anniversary.

There was no official Israeli reply to the Lithuanian bid. But Foreign Ministry sources expressed hope that if the Lithuanian republic achieves independence, diplomatic relations with Israel would be established.

The message actually came from Yitzhak Maas, described as a personal friend of Landsbergis. He said he received the fax from the Lithuanian president on April 26, with the request that he pass on the message to Herzog.

"On Independence Day, we send best wishes to the Knesset of Israel and hope for good relations between us," it said.

Landsbergis also claimed Lithuania was "doing all in its power to renew the cultural life, and guard and develop the religious and national identity of the Jews of Lithuania."

The message noted that "part of Lithuanian Jewry lives today in Israel" and "we want relations with them and with the historic homeland of the people of Israel."

It made reference to "the brutal and tragic fate that befell the Jewish citizens" when Lithuania lost its independence.

The country, given independence from Russia in 1919, was occupied by Soviet troops after Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 and continued under Soviet control until June 1941, when the Germans invaded Russia.

At that time, the Lithuanians declared their independence a second time, and many Lithuanians collaborated with the Nazis until the Germans were driven out by the Red Army in 1945.

Israelis of Lithuanian origin demanded last month that the Baltic country acknowledge its role during the Holocaust before Israel would acknowledge its independence status.

**AS ISRAEL GEARS UP FOR MORE ALIYAH,
RECENT OLIM COMPLAIN ABOUT RED TAPE**

By Cathrine Gerson and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, May 1 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency is planning for the large-scale absorption of Ethiopian Jews this year, even though it is uncertain that the Ethiopian government will let them leave.

At the same time, the World Zionist Organization is sending more emissaries to Argentina, where dire economic conditions are expected to stimulate aliyah by many of that country's 250,000 Jews.

Those developments were reported to a visiting group of New York fund-raisers by Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the WZO and Jewish Agency Executives.

But even as Dinitz was outlining these plans in Jerusalem, some 300 angry recent immigrants from the Soviet Union demonstrated Tuesday

outside the Absorption Ministry office in Netanya.

They complained bitterly of their problems finding jobs and affordable housing and of the runaround they say they are getting at the hands of Israel's fabled bureaucracy.

Robert Groisman, a 36-year-old mechanical engineer, arrived in Israel with his wife and two young children four months ago. He has not yet found work, but has to pay the equivalent of \$400 a month for rent.

Groisman, who speaks only Russian, said he had problems registering his son at the local kindergarten. He was sent from office to office without finding anyone who would enroll his boy.

Robert Golan, chairman of the Association of Soviet New Immigrants in Israel, told Israel Radio that "whatever may have been the bureaucratic problems for Jews wishing to leave the Soviet Union, they were nothing compared to what they find here when they finally arrive home."

Over 10,000 Soviet Jews In April

Employees of the absorption offices where the olim go for information about jobs and housing agree with some of the complaints, but attribute the bureaucratic snarls to insufficient staffing. They say they are denied extra help to deal with the flood of immigrants because of budgetary constraints.

Soviet Jews who have been in Israel six months or longer and have still not found work expressed fear of what will happen when the Absorption Ministry cuts off their rent subsidies after their first 12 months in Israel.

Problems such as these are being seen by a delegation of more than 800 American Jewish leaders currently visiting Israel on a mission sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

It is the largest New York group ever to visit Israel and includes such prominent political figures as Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin and Andrew O'Rourke, the Westchester County executive.

Dinitz told the group that more than 10,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants arrived in April, a new record. Total aliyah from all countries last month was 11,475.

ISRAEL'S MAY DAY HOLIDAY IS SUBDUED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 1 (JTA) -- May Day, the international holiday of the labor movement, was celebrated in an uncertain and desultory manner in Israel on Tuesday.

There were no parades, massed red flags or ringing oratory, as in years past.

Reflective probably of the ebbing of socialist fervor here and abroad, and the fact that Israelis have just had two days off from work -- Remembrance Day and Independence Day -- most people stayed on the job.

Teachers and students were given the option to take the day off, if they gave advance notice. Israelis are given the choice to observe either May Day or Tisha B'Av.

The choice applies to government employees, but most reported for work.

Although some enterprises of Histadrut, Israel's trade federation, were closed, and others manned by skeleton staffs, Histadrut was reluctant to call for a general work stoppage, which could hurt the economy at a time of high unemployment.