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ISRAEL RELEASES 15 PRISONERS DESPITE NEW VIOLENCE IN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Despite renewed violence in southern Lebanon, Israel and its allied South Lebanon Army released 15 detainees Monday to facilitate a prisoners-for-hostages exchange.

One was a Hezbollah member held inside Israel. The other 14 were Lebanese Shi'ites detained by the SLA at the El-Khiam camp in the southern Lebanon security zone. Described as "minor offenders" serving one- to four-year sentences, they were freed on orders of the Israel Defense Force as a "humanitarian gesture."

There were reports from Lebanon on Monday that hours after the Israeli move, kidnappers in Lebanon had freed American hostage Jesse Turner. But later in the day, U.S. and Syrian officials said they had received no confirmation that Turner had indeed been released.

The hostage situation was complicated by a new spate of violence in southern Lebanon that began Sunday, when a remote-control bomb planted by members of Hezbollah, the Islamic fundamentalist Party of God, killed three IDF soldiers, all members of an armored patrol of the elite Golani Brigade.

The IDF identified the dead Israeli soldiers as Master Sgt. Naif Hayed, 35, a Druse tracker and father of six from the Galilee village of Tuba; Sgt. Nadav Yisraeli, 20, of Tzova; and Sgt. Haim Hanoch, 19, of Ofakim.

Two other soldiers were wounded, one seriously. Capt. Doron Yona of Jerusalem, who led the armored patrol, was reported in critical condition with head and chest wounds. Cpl. Amir Avrahami, 19, was hospitalized for moderate wounds.

Retribution Against Villagers

Israeli air force jets pounded Hezbollah headquarters at Jibshit, southwest of Nabatiya, on Monday, after a 24-hour barrage by IDF and SLA artillery.

An IDF spokesman declared the target totally destroyed and said all aircraft returned safely to their bases.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Monday that Israel was not willing and had not been asked to put "any limititations on ourselves" in the ongoing war with Hezbollah.

And Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, IDF commander of the northern region, threatened severe retribution against villages in southern Lebanon who aid or shelter Hezbollah fighters.

"They cannot expect to live in peace and quiet in their villages if they allow the Hezbollah to use them to launch attacks against us," he warned.

The SLA commander, Gen. Antoine Lehad, imposed a blockade on 11 Shi'ite villages near Nabatiya. He warned that any person or vehicle caught moving outside the villages would be shot.

The Hezbollah member freed by Israel was identified as Ali Habas Fawzi. He was handed over to Red Cross representatives at the Rosh Hanikra border crossing and escorted to Tyre.

The other detainees, including two women, also were taken to Tyre. Nine said they planned to return to their homes in the security zone.

NEWS ANALYSIS: SHAMIR GOVERNMENT INTACT FOR NOW, BUT FUTURE UNCLEAR ONCE TALKS BEGIN

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is leading Israel to the Middle East peace conference in Madrid next week confident that his coalition majority will hold at least through the formal opening Oct. 30.

But after that, once the separate direct talks with individual Arab states and the Palestinians begin, the future of both the peace process and the Likud-led Israeli government is unpredictable.

Already, the far-right Tehiya party announced it will quit the government, splitting with its leader, Science and Energy Minister Yuval Ne'eman, who opposed the peace talks but wanted to remain in the coalition for the moment.

The other far-right factions are staying in the government for now. So are Likud hard-liners, despite ominous rumblings from their midst.

Israel's internal political outlook after the Cabinet voted overwhelmingly Sunday to attend the conference is therefore as uncertain as that of the peace process itself.

It would have been impossible to resist the blandishments of the United States after Secretary of State James Baker and his Soviet counterpart, Boris Pankin, issued the invitations Friday, before Shamir was able to consult his Cabinet.

But pundits are wary about the future of a conference convened under relentless pressure from the United States, reinforced by its now junior partner, the Soviet Union.

Some are unwilling to predict what will happen to the bilateral negotiations that are to begin four days after the ceremonial opening, according to the conference protocols. Others foresee crises and ruptures down the line.

Shamir Won't Sack Sharon

Shamir's political strength has been confirmed, at least in the short term. A Cabinet revolt launched by his arch rival, Ariel Sharon, got nowhere Sunday.

The housing minister, who makes no secret of his hope to replace Shamir, demanded that the premier, Foreign Minister David Levy and Defense Minister Moshe Arens tender their resignations.

"Show that you are not Eduard Benes," he thundered, an allusion to the leader of Czechoslovakia who was betrayed to Hitler by Britain and France at the 1938 Munich conference.

Shamir made clear, however, that he did not intend to fire Sharon. "I think I act in accordance with circumstances and needs," he told reporters, intimating that for political reasons, he feels unable to sack the recalcitrant minister.

Sharon's histrionics failed to arouse any ringing response from within his own party.

Most Likud Knesset members are giving Shamir and his negotiating team -- made up of his closest aides -- their solid support, despite grave misgivings about the peace conference.

There are exceptions. Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud deputy foreign minister, warned Saturday night that Israel "must prepare now for the collapse of the conference."

But political circles interpreted his remarks

as more an expression of his personal frustration over playing no central role in policy-making, than a threat to the prime minister.

The hard-line Netanyahu, a former ambassador to the United Nations, has poor relations with his boss, David Levy, who does not want to include him in the delegation to Madrid.

Ne'eman Quitting Politics

The situation with Tehiya is not considered an immediate threat. The party, which has spearheaded the right-wing assault on Shamir's policy, suffered a wrenching internal upheaval.

Ne'eman, a physicist of international repute, announced Sunday night that he was quitting political life to return to science. Departing from Tehiya, he is expected to resign his Cabinet seat.

The issue that split the party was whether to bolt the coalition over the government's agreement to attend the Madrid conference. The party's three-member Knesset faction was all for leaving.

Although Ne'eman was one of the three Cabinet ministers who voted against participation in the conference, he counseled patience to his party. There would be ample time to secede, he said, when the talks turn to territorial questions.

But Ne'eman was overruled Sunday night by the party's Central Committee. It resolved to leave the government as soon as the conference opens next week.

The two other far-right parties are staying put.

Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, who heads the two-man Tsomet faction, in fact voted with the Cabinet majority.

Rehavam Ze'evi, a minister without portfolio, voted with Sharon and Ne'eman. But his Moledet party will stay in the coalition for now, he said.

The right-wing parties lack the combined strength to force the government to resign. To accomplish that, they would need the Labor Party. But Labor is determined to prop Shamir up as long as he stays on course to peace, even if he should lose his majority in the Knesset.

At any rate, even if a government falls, it stays in power as a caretaker regime until a new coalition is formed or new elections are held.

Should such a scenario unfold, Shamir would be politically and constitutionally able to proceed with his present policy if he so desired.

POLICE BRACE FOR SPATE OF VIOLENCE FROM GROUPS OPPOSED TO PEACE TALKS
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Alerted by a flood of intelligence reports warning of violence by terrorist groups opposed to next week's peace conference in Madrid, the Jerusalem police high command met at national headquarters here Monday to plan security measures.

"We'll do everything possible to stop them," Police Inspector-General Ya'acov Terner declared.

Police reinforcements already have been posted on roads leading to the administered territories. The Israel Defense Force is mobilizing similarly in the territories themselves.

Two rejectionist organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, joined forces with the violence-prone Islamic fundamentalist Hamas in a communique Monday.

It urged the Palestinian people to continue "the armed struggle until the liberation of Palestine" is achieved. It called for a general strike in the territories when the peace conference opens.

The communique was a challenge to the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has endorsed the peace talks, and to PLO supporters in the territories.

Meanwhile, an Arab terrorist was fatally wounded Monday in East Jerusalem while assembling an explosive charge. The blast occurred only a few hundred yards from police headquarters in the Sheik Jarrah neighborhood.

An Arab woman was hospitalized for a leg wound after she was shot by a border policeman whom she attacked with a knife Sunday. The police officer suffered a minor wound.

ISRAEL DENIES BOOK'S ALLEGATION SOVIETS GOT POLLARD INTELLIGENCE
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- The Israeli Embassy here has dismissed as "totally nonsense" a new book's allegation that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir ordered that Moscow be given secret U.S. intelligence on the Soviet Union obtained by convicted spy Jonathan Jay Pollard.

But Ruth Yaron, the embassy spokeswoman, had no comment Monday on another charge by the book's author, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, that Pollard was a spy for Israel for four years, not the 17 months for which the former U.S. naval intelligence analyst was convicted in 1987.

Yaron would also not comment on Hersh's assertion in "The Samson Option" that during the Iraqi Scud missile attacks on Israel earlier this year, Israel went on full nuclear alert, ready to launch nuclear missiles against Baghdad.

Israel had gone on such an alert twice before, during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Hersh claims in the book.

Israel has never admitted or denied that it has nuclear weapons. Yaron repeated Israel's standard comment that the Jewish state "will not be the first to introduce nuclear arms in the Middle East."

Hersh's book describes the development of Israel's nuclear weapons program, which he says now totals more than 300 tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

Israel targeted the Soviet Union with missiles containing nuclear warheads as a means of persuading the Soviets to limit their aid to Arab countries in event of war, Hersh claims. He writes that Pollard was recruited in 1981 to provide Israel with information on Soviet targets.

Hersh says that Shamir, who has always wanted to improve relations with the Soviet Union, gave Moscow a sanitized version of material obtained by Pollard to show Israel's good will.

Much of Hersh's information, including the charge that Shamir authorized providing the Soviet Union with the intelligence, came from Arie Ben-Menashe, a former Israeli government employee.

Ben-Menashe was charged in New York two years ago with trying to sell Israeli military equipment to Iran. When the charges were dropped, Ben-Menashe claimed he was an Israeli intelligence operative.

Ben-Menashe was actually a "low-level translator" and did not have the kind of access to intelligence which he claimed, said Yaron.

Hersh insists that all information he received from Ben-Menashe was verified by a second source.

HAVEL DECRIES ANTI-SEMITISM IN SPEECH CAPPING HERZOG VISIT

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- President Vaclav Havel delivered an impassioned condemnation of anti-Semitism and its ultimate expression, the Holocaust, here Saturday night, saying it shamed him as a member of the human race.

The playwright, who became Czechoslovakia's chief of state when democratic government replaced 40 years of Communist rule two years ago, has denounced anti-Semitism on past occasions.

But he spoke with special eloquence at a concert attended by Israeli President Chaim Herzog, who was ending a weeklong state visit to Czechoslovakia.

He recalled, as few national leaders do, that collaborators among his own countrymen implemented Nazi racial laws during World War II. He branded them "the non-murdering murderers."

Havel said he was always rendered "desperately speechless" by evidence of the Holocaust.

"Whenever I am faced with documents on the Holocaust, on concentration camps, on mass extermination of Jews by Hitler, on racial laws and on the endless suffering of the Jewish people during World War II, I feel strangely paralyzed," he said.

"I know that I should say something, do something, draw some conclusions from all that, yet at the same time I feel that any words I could say would be false, inadequate, inapt or deficient, and that I am unable to do more than stand there in silence and incomprehension."

Havel attested to "a metaphysical feeling of shame of the human race, of mankind, of man. I feel that this is his crime and his disgrace."

He recalled that when he was a little boy during the Nazi occupation, he "envied some other children the six-pointed yellow stars they wore on their breasts. I thought it was a decoration," he said.

"If it is not to happen ever again that any children be compelled to wear on their clothes a brand designed to warn others against them and to indicate that they are inferior," he said, "we have to remind ourselves time and again of the horrors that befell the Jewish people, chosen to rouse, through their suffering, the conscience of humanity."

Only The Dead Can Forgive

Only a few days earlier, Herzog himself declared that "only the dead are entitled to forgive, and those alive should not forget."

The Israeli president spoke at the Jewish cemetery in Terezin, a town in Bohemia 30 miles north of Prague, where the Nazis established a massive ghetto for Czechoslovak and foreign Jews, most of them en route to death camps in Poland.

Herzog was addressing a group of several hundred survivors from various countries.

The Czech prime minister, Peter Pithart, used the occasion to denounce anti-Semitic utterances he said are being heard even in countries like Czechoslovakia that were left after the war with hardly any Jewish population.

In an unrelated ceremony last Friday, an American rabbi representing the U.S. government signed an agreement with officials in Prague for the protection and preservation of historic sites and monuments marking each other's cultural heritage.

The pact, signed by Rabbi Arthur Schneier of New York and Martin Stropnicky, director of the cultural policy section of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, creates a joint commission of the two countries to help identify, protect and preserve historic sites and cultural properties, including Jewish cemeteries in Czechoslovakia.

Schneier signed as chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, an office he was sworn into by Vice President Dan Quayle in June.

CANADIAN DEFENDER OF NAZIS GIVEN PLATFORM IN AUSTRALIA

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia Oct. 21 (JTA) -- The Toronto lawyer who has defended Nazi war criminals and neo-Nazi activists in Canada has been spreading anti-Semitic and Holocaust revisionist propaganda in Australia, in the familiar guise of "Zionist conspiracy" theories.

Douglas Christie, the lawyer for revisionist pamphleteer Ernst Zundel and several suspected war criminals living in Canada, has been on a speaking tour for the Australian League of Rights, a racist organization that has sponsored his appearances in Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.

Christie told radio listeners in Adelaide, South Australia, last week that "the majority of historians" were proved wrong on the Holocaust by his client Zundel, whose first conviction was reversed on a technicality.

He claimed the figure of 6 million Jewish Holocaust dead was concocted to satisfy a political agenda rather than reflect historical events and that an "international Zionist conspiracy" is trying to impose "a reign of terror" against "anyone who denies the Holocaust in Australia."

Jewish groups accused the Australian Broadcasting Corp. of unintentionally promoting racist propaganda by failing to identify Christie as the defender of several suspected war criminals.

They pointed out that his sponsor is an organization identified in the latest report of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission as "the most influential and effective, as well as the best organized and most substantially financed, racist organization in Australia."

Christie claimed that legislation recently adopted in Canada and Australia to bring war criminals to justice was introduced to satisfy the "desire and objective of Zionist groups." Such legislation is "opposed to the Christian vision of justice," he said.

NEO-NAZIS GATHER IN THE NETHERLANDS

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- Neo-Nazis from Holland, Britain and Germany were filmed by a television crew last week at a meeting in an opulent villa near the Dutch city of Arnhem. They were shown under a portrait of Adolf Hitler.

Ray Edmonds, representing the British National Party, denied that 6 million Jews were killed by the Nazis. "If any Jews were killed, they were killed as spies, and rightly so, just as in Britain spies were killed during the war," Edmonds claimed.

The meeting was the most recent neo-Nazi gathering hosted by Flora Rost van Tonningen, widow of notorious Dutch Nazi collaborator Meinhoud Rost van Tonningen, who died in prison after World War II.

'REBBE OF TIBET' GETS WELCOME FROM JEWISH GROUP IN NEW YORK
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- You might say that he's the rebbe of Tibet.

Followers of the Dalai Lama, the saffron-and-maroon-robed, 56-year-old spiritual and political leader of Tibetan Buddhists, revere and adore him in a way very similar to the way Hasidim feel about their rebbe.

During a trip to New York this week and last, thousands of the Dalai Lama's adherents filled the Paramount Theatre in New York's Madison Square Garden to listen to him "farbreng" -- expound upon the essential teachings of the faith.

And like the followers of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Buddhists travel from around the world to be near him, flocking to Dharmsala, the northern Indian city that serves as the Dalai Lama's headquarters-in-exile, to receive his blessings.

Tibetans have been in exile from their homeland since 1959, when they fled occupation by the People's Republic of China. Now they are dispersed across the continents.

About 130,000 live in India, according to Thubten Sanphel, a spokesperson for the Office of Tibet here. Many more live in Nepal and Bhutan, especially in the Himalayas, and others are in Western nations.

All told, the Dalai Lama has about 6 million Tibetan followers, Sanphel said.

He confers blessings on the people who come to him and on the food they bring, and he hands out "blessing strings."

The Buddhists then consume the blessed food and wear the strings around their neck, as if to ingest the Dalai Lama's enlightenment and to be guarded from illness by the strings made holy by his blessing.

It's not too different from the way people keep the crisp dollar bills given out by the Lubavitcher rebbe for tzedakah and donate others to charity, or line up for hours to get a piece of the honey cake that the rebbe passes out at holiday time.

"If people eat what was blessed by the lama (superior one), they themselves become blessed," explained Sanphel.

A Real Affinity With Jews

The Dalai Lama feels a real affinity with Jews, from whom he wants his people to learn "the secrets" of survival in exile.

"For more than 20 centuries the Jewish people in exile kept your tradition, your culture, in some cases under hostile circumstances," the Dalai Lama said at a reception given in his honor by Jewish organizations on Oct. 17.

"We must study this experience. Sometimes I tell my Jewish friends, 'You have a secret thing and it is that which we want to steal, because we, too, are facing extinction,' " he said.

"Wherever the Jewish community lived they not only preserved their identity," he said, "but the more suffering they had, the more inner strength."

The reception was organized by the American Jewish World Service, which raises and distributes funds for development and disaster relief projects in Jewish and non-Jewish communities worldwide.

The group has granted more than $48,000 to the Tibetan community in India to help it develop economic self-reliance and preserve its cultural heritage.

Elie Wiesel, addressing his fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner and the hundreds of Jews attending the reception, said: "As Jews, we must be sensitive to other people's ambitions and aspirations."

Author and Orthodox feminist Blu Greenberg, who attended the reception and had met with the Dalai Lama at a Tibetan retreat in Washington, N.J., in 1988, and in Dharmsala last year, observed that Tibetans and Jews share more than the experience of exile.

They share the challenge of "integrating modernity and not abandoning our particularist traditions and roots," she said. "We share also a convergence of spiritual, religious, national and political concerns."

And not least among the reasons for the collegial relationship between the Dalai Lama and Jews "is that he likes the Jewish people," Greenberg said. "That's no mean feat among religious and political leaders in our time."

REMAINING ETHIOPIAN JEWS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN ISRAEL WITHIN 6 MONTHS
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- All of the remaining Jews in Ethiopia should be in Israel within six months, the chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives predicted Monday.

Simcha Dinitz told the WZO Executive that arrivals from Addis Ababa have been proceeding at a rate of 100 to 150 a week since the massive Operation Solomon airlift brought more than 14,000 Ethiopian olim to Israel last May 24-25.

Jewish Agency emissaries are active in the Gondar region, where the last Jewish community in Ethiopia lives, trying to organize their departure, he said.

Dinitz also said the recent agreement between El Al and Aeroflot for direct flights from Soviet cities to Israel would result in a better-organized flow of Soviet immigrants.

He said there is nothing to prevent other airlines from organizing similar services.

That may have been intended as encouragement to Israeli businessman Ya'acov Nimrodi, who launched a direct service called Aerolicht two weeks ago, using aircraft chartered from Aeroflot.

The Jewish Agency had initially expressed reservations over the venture, which ran into difficulties at the outset.

ISRAEL AGAIN TRIES LIVER TRANSPLANT
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 21 (JTA) -- A 14-year-old Soviet immigrant was reported in critical but stable condition Monday after undergoing the first liver transplant operation ever performed at the Hadassah-Hebrew University Hospital at Ein Kerem in Jerusalem.

Michael Yacobov, who arrived in Israel 10 months ago, suffers from hepatitis B, a life threatening infectious disease.

Dr. Ahmed Ya'id, a senior surgeon at the hospital, said it would be a week before it is known whether the teen-ager who survived the eight-hour operation will live. The potential problem is rejection of the transplanted organ.

Four previous liver transplants have been performed in Israel, none of them successful.