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ARENS SAYS HE'S QUITTING POLITICS, LEAVING BEHIND A DISPIRITED LIKUD

By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 25 (JTA) -- While the victorious Labor Party plunged into the task of building a coalition government, a defeated, dispirited Likud appeared on the verge of crumbling.

Moshe Arens, defense minister in the outgoing government, announced Thursday night that he was resigning from the Knesset and from national politics after an 18-year career.

Appearing on Israel Television's evening news show, Arens, a former ambassador to the United States, said he had thought about quitting for a long time but conceded that Likud's poor showing in Tuesday's elections influenced his decision.

Outgoing Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who has hinted that his own resignation is not far off, promptly expressed regret and said he would try to persuade his longtime political ally to reconsider.

Arens said he would certainly listen, but added: "I've made my decision."

His resignation is expected to take effect when the new government is installed, probably on July 13, when the newly elected Knesset begins its first session.

Meanwhile, the Labor Party's leadership bureau convened Thursday for the first time since the elections and appointed a 17-member negotiating team to form a new coalition.

The offices at the old 110 Hayarkon St. party headquarters in Tel Aviv were packed to overflowing with party leaders and activists.

In a tough, no-nonsense speech, party Chairman Yitzhak Rabin reiterated that only authorized representatives of the party could conduct negotiations with possible coalition partners.

Religious Parties Being Considered

He also stated that he intended to use fully his powers as prime minister. The government cannot function efficiently unless the prime minister is in full charge, he said.

That comment was interpreted as a warning to his old rival Shimon Peres that Rabin would not tolerate factional power politics.

But Peres supporters had already decided not to function as a separate political camp in the party. They had only to see the bitter factionalism rending Likud.

Knesset member Avraham Burg, a Peres supporter, said Thursday that the days of the political camps are over.

Peres and Rabin were scheduled to meet privately soon to try to work out a pattern for coexistence in the new government. Although Peres said he was not asking for a Cabinet portfolio, associates say he would not turn down the Defense, Foreign or Finance ministries, all posts he has held in the past.

The party's leadership bureau unanimously elected the first 12 names on Labor's Knesset list and five others to constitute the coalition negotiating team.

Party Secretary-General Micha Harish said Thursday that the left-wing Meretz and the strictly Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism parties would be the first candidates for coalition partners.

But he said that in his view, Labor should also consider Rafael Eitan's far-right Tsomet party, which is avowedly secular and campaigns on a good-government, anti-corruption platform.

Meanwhile, the Council of Sages which governs the United Torah Judaism party gave it the green light Thursday to join a Labor-led coalition. Its only condition was that the other religious parties join as well.

Shulamit Aloni, the leader of Meretz, and Rabbi Menachem Porush of United Torah Judaism said on the radio Thursday that they could cooperate in a Rabin-led coalition.

Shamir May Be Next To Go

Meanwhile, the retiring Arens listed three reasons for Likud's debacle:

First, the party was plagued by internal disputes, while Labor "learned the lessons of the past and presented the voter with a facade of internal unity."

Second, part of the public does not see Greater Israel as a "sufficient solution" to the Palestinian problem.

And third, the economy did not register "sufficient growth" by the eve of the election.

Arens called on his party to "learn its lessons" but stopped short of suggesting that any of its leaders resign.

Asked whom he would support for the leadership, Arens replied that there were "many good people, perhaps that's our trouble -- we've got so many good people in the Likud."

But some, he added, are "too ambitious."

The party, ousted after 15 years in power, will undoubtedly do some soul-searching, even though Shamir maintained that a housecleaning is not needed.

The prime minister reiterated Thursday that the time has come for him to step down as Likud's leader. He said he would soon quit, but he gave no date.

Speaking in a philosophical vein to a rally of policemen in Jerusalem, he said election defeats "were part of political life."

HOUSE PASSES FOREIGN AID BILL WITH $3 BILLION FOR ISRAEL INTACT

By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, June 25 (JTA) -- The House of Representatives has passed a $13.8 billion foreign aid bill that reflects wide-ranging cuts but leaves aid to Israel and Egypt intact at current levels.

The bill, adopted Thursday by a vote of 297-124, calls for Israel to receive $1.2 billion in economic aid and $1.8 billion in foreign military financing grants.

It also provides $25 million for private organizations working on health, education, rural road construction and other services for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, up $13 million over the previous year.

A vote had been scheduled on an amendment that would have cut 1 percent from foreign aid

spending across the board, including earmarked aid to Israel and Egypt. But it was dropped, to the relief of Israel's supporters, who had lobbied hard against the measure.

The bill cuts nearly $1.3 billion from the Bush administration's plan for foreign aid and amounts to the lowest percentage ever of this country's gross national product.

The spare bill reflects mounting concern about the domestic budget crisis. It also demonstrates a post-Cold War shift in priorities from military assistance to humanitarian aid and economic development programs that would help U.S. business.

Conditional Cut In Jordan Aid

Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), said the plan represents a balance between the moral obligation of the United States "to other creatures on the planet" and the recognition that "our highest obligation is to our own people."

Obey is chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations and the chief architect of the bill. He had planned to offer the 1 percent cut amendment to demonstrate nothing should be exempt from cuts required by the fiscal crisis. But he dropped the idea, calling the subcommittee's budget "the tightest ever."

The administration protested the spending level approved as inadequate, saying it would "jeopardize our ability to support the transition to democracy and economic freedom around the world."

In particular, the White House expressed strong objections to the bill's elimination of free military assistance to NATO allies.

It also objected to a provision in the bill calling for a cutoff of military aid to Jordan unless the president certifies Amman is cooperating with the peace process and with U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

The bill allows for $150 million of Israel's military aid to be used for research and development in the United States, while at least $475 million is set aside for procurement in Israel of defense-related goods and services.

The bill also calls on the State Department to report to Congress by March 1, 1993 on the status of the Arab boycott of companies doing business with Israel and on the State Department's efforts to end the boycott.

No Mention Of Loan Guarantees

Rep. Bill Green (R-N.Y.) lauded the Israel aid package, saying, "Now, more than ever, Israel needs to know of continued U.S. support."

He said he was disappointed, however, that the bill is "silent on the issue of U.S. loan guarantees" requested by Israel to help absorb immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

"Now that the elections are over, I hope the administration will work swiftly" to put a loan guarantee package together, he said. In fact, high-level administration officials have indicated in recent days it is likely some deal on the guarantees will be made once a new Israeli government is formed.

The American Jewish Congress was one of the pro-Israel groups that had organized grassroots lobbying efforts across the country on the importance of foreign aid and on aid to Israel in particular.

"Israel has been, and remains, the United States' only democratic dependable ally in a region characterized by political instability, religious ferment and violent extremism," AJCongress President Robert Lifton wrote in a letter to House members.

"The investment represented by U.S. foreign aid to Israel will strengthen this crucial alliance," he wrote.

AJCongress also had opposed another controversial amendment, withdrawn at the last moment, to cut the $20 million appropriated for the United Nations Population Fund. That appropriation is strongly opposed by the administration.

The Senate must still approve its own foreign aid bill, which will then be reconciled with the House version.

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE CLAIMS 3 ISRAELI LIVES
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 25 (JTA) -- Two Israelis were brutally murdered by Arab assailants in the Gaza Strip on Thursday and an Israeli soldier was killed in a gun battle in the West Bank that left three Palestinians dead.

The bloodshed, the worst in weeks, interrupted the formation of a new government in the aftermath of Tuesday's Knesset elections.

Yitzhak Rabin, leader of the victorious Labor Party, who is virtually certain to be the next prime minister, broke off coalition talks to warn terrorists that his regime would crack down "with all possible force" on inciters and killers.

The civilian victims were identified as Moshe Bino, 49, of Ashkelon and Ami Salzman, 59, from Ness Ziona, co-managers of the Al Kuba meatpacking plant in the Gaza Strip.

They were mortally wounded by four intruders who arrived by car and, pretending to be buyers, gained entry to the plant. Once inside they repeatedly stabbed their victims in the chest and back and fled.

An army doctor summoned to the scene tried vainly to save them but both men died shortly after being attacked. They brought to three the number of Israeli civilians stabbed to death by Arabs in the Gaza Strip since May 27.

The assault occurred less than a mile from Nahal Oz, where the Israel Defense Force has a base and a checkpoint controlling the movement of Palestinians in and out of Israel proper. Security forces immediately sealed off the area and began a search for the killers.

The packing plant, owned jointly by Kibbutz Yad Mordechai and the Israeli civil administration, is in a relatively quiet area where the movement of Israeli civilians is not restricted.

Rabin, who said the victims "were murdered to harm the chances of peace," told Labor Party officials that "anyone who thinks a government headed by us will not deal with terror in all its forms is making a bad mistake."

Likud hardliner Ariel Sharon claimed Thursday that if a Rabin government pulled out of the Gaza Strip, terrorist activity would rise to the level of the 1950s, when the territory was controlled by Egypt.

The military fatality occurred when an undercover IDF squad exchanged fire with four armed Palestinians in Arraba, a village near Jenin in the West Bank. One of the Palestinians escaped.

IDF sources said the Palestinians belonged to the Red Eagle group of George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and had been on the wanted list for murder since 1990.

MISSILE EXPERT BACKS CLAIM U.S. FAILED TO DESTROY SCUDS

NEW YORK, June 25 (JTA) -- A U.S. expert who has disputed Pentagon claims that American aircraft wreaked destruction on Iraqi Scud missiles during the Persian Gulf War may have vindicated an Israel air force general who was sharply rapped this week for saying essentially the same thing.

The expert, Scott Ritter, was quoted Wednesday in a New York Times article as insisting that "no mobile Scud launchers were destroyed during the war," notwithstanding elaborate claims to the contrary made to American television audiences by top military brass.

Ritter, a former Marine Corps captain, is a ballistic missile analyst with the U.N. commission in charge of supervising the destruction of Iraq's weaponry. He was quoted in an op-ed piece written by Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media studies at Johns Hopkins University and author of a forthcoming book on the Gulf war.

According to the article, despite the hype aimed at generating public enthusiasm for the war, U.S. aircraft failed to find, much less destroy, most of the Scud launchers, fixed or mobile.

The Pentagon declared the Scud missile sites "destroyed" on Jan. 16, 1991. A day later, seven Scuds smashed into Tel Aviv, Haifa and other parts of Israel, the article points out.

Reserve Maj. Gen. Avihu Bin-Nun, who commanded the Israeli air force during the war, was taken to task by his own government and by the United States for saying in an Air Force Day speech last week that the United States not only failed to destroy the Iraqi Scuds but did not even try.

In Washington, the Pentagon issued an angry rebuttal and Israeli Defense Ministry spokesman Danny Naveh dissociated the ministry from Bin-Nun's remarks.

In Israel, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir fumed that the statement was unwarranted. And U.S. Ambassador William Harrop said, "I can't understand how someone who was as closely involved with the events as he was could say such things."

Bin-Nun made the controversial remarks June 18 at a forum of systems analysts in Tel Aviv. He was quoted as saying, "It's not that the U.S. military failed to stop Iraqi Scud launchings against Israel; they never tried.

"I know that this is a very harsh accusation, but I stand firmly behind it," the general said.

Bin-Nun was quoted as saying that only a very small proportion of U.S. air sorties during the Gulf war were aimed at destroying Scud missile launchers and that the United States failed to use attack helicopters for that purpose.

He also charged that the few attacks made by U.S. aircraft on the Scud launching sites had the purpose of deterring the Israeli air force from doing the job itself.

A total of 39 Scud missiles struck Israel during the war, causing extensive property damage but no serious casualties.

The U.S. Air Force and Special Operations Command insist they destroyed many Scud missiles and mobile launchers, but American intelligence agencies, relying largely on satellite photos, do not confirm the damage estimates, the New York Times article pointed out.

U.N. BODY ENDS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY WITHOUT ANTI-ISRAEL RESOLUTION
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, June 25 (JTA) -- For the first time in 25 years, the International Labor Organization closed its annual General Assembly without adopting an anti-Israel resolution.

Moreover, its report on the rights of Arab workers in the Israeli administered territories, while charging Israel with many violations, also credited the Israeli civil administration with promoting economic development and providing educational services.

Those acknowledgements were cited by Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Yitzhak Lior. He said the report submitted this year by ILO Director-General Michel Hansenne "displays a greater appreciation of the realities in the territories than have previous reports."

Hansenne said, "I am happy to see the spirit of cooperation manifested by Israel regarding our educational vocational training amongst Palestinian workers."

He reiterated the suggestion he made last year that Palestinian trade unions be recognized and permitted to organize freely.

His report was based on the findings of an ILO delegation that visited Israel and the territories earlier this year.

Lior stressed that "it is only in the interests of maintaining good relations with the ILO that we receive the delegation and give them free access to our country."

The envoy noted that Israeli efforts to improve conditions "are carried out in spite of frequent acts of blind terrorism committed against Israelis and Palestinians alike."

He protested "against the blatant singling out of Israel as an object of special debate" by the U.N. agency.

MITTERRAND RECEIVES CO-SPONSORS OF ANTI-SEMITISM CONFERENCE
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, June 25 (JTA) -- The co-sponsors of an international conference on resurgent anti-Semitism were received by President Francois Mitterrand Wednesday evening, several hours after the two-day meeting ended here.

The gathering represented an unusual collaboration between the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center.

UNESCO until a few years ago was a bastion of pro-Arab, anti-Western sentiment in which Israel was regularly attacked.

Mitterrand personally congratulated the organizers of the conference, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, director-general of UNESCO and Rabbis Marvin Hier and Abraham Cooper, co-deans of the Wiesenthal Center.

Mitterrand is reported to have said that "most anti-Semitism is latent, but it could turn bloody." He did not elaborate.

The French president, who had been scheduled to address the conference but bowed out at the last minute, apologized for his absence.

He said he was occupied at an urgent meeting of both chambers of the French Parliament in Versailles to discuss the crisis surrounding the Maastricht Treaty, which would unite the European Community.

WISCONSIN HATE CRIMES LAW STRUCK DOWN BY STATE COURT
By Leon Cohen
The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle

MILWAUKEE, June 25 (JTA) -- Wisconsin has become the first state to have its hate crimes law invalidated as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling Monday against an anti-hate ordinance in St. Paul, Minn.

On Tuesday, the Wisconsin state Supreme Court struck down the statute. But the battle is not over.

State Attorney General Jim Doyle has decided to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case, and he is being supported by the Milwaukee Jewish Council, which plans to file a friend-of-the-court brief asking the U.S. high court to accept the case.

But that is problematic. If state Sen. Lynn Adelman, an opponent of the hate crimes law, is correct, the U.S. Supreme Court will not accept the case because the state court's ruling "is consistent" with its St. Paul decision.

"Let's close this chapter on this effort to criminalize bias," said Adelman, who is Jewish, "Let's devote our efforts to dealing with the causes of bigotry."

But Mordecai Lee, executive director of the Jewish Council, predicted the U.S. Supreme Court will be receptive.

All nine justices voted to strike down the St. Paul ordinance, which prohibited placing "on public or private property a symbol, object, appellation, characterization or graffiti" likely to arouse "anger, alarm or resentment in others on the basis of race, color, creed, religion or gender."

Four justices concurred with Justice Antonin Scalia's opinion that the law was unconstitutional. The other four indicated that another type of hate crimes law could be constitutional.

"I think (Wisconsin's) law is so substantially different from the St. Paul law that we can make a strong case that it is constitutional," said Lee of the Jewish Council.

Based On Suspect's Motives

Chief Justice Nathan Heffernan authored the majority opinion in the state court's 5-2 decision. He argued that Wisconsin's hate crimes law "unconstitutionally infringes upon free speech."

The 1988 law, which Lee authored as a state senator, adds penalties for acts already illegal. The statute takes effect when a prosecutor proves a perpetrator selected a victim because of the perpetrator's bias against the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation.

The court's decision came in the case of a Kenosha black man, Todd Mitchell, who in 1989 urged a group to black youths to attack Gregory Reddick, then 14, who was walking past.

Mitchell was convicted of aggravated battery and sentenced to two years in prison, plus two more years under the hate crimes law because the victim was selected because he was white. Mitchell appealed the additional sentence on constitutional grounds.

Heffernan objected to the state law because it is "directed solely at the subjective motivation of the actor -- his or her prejudice. Punishment of one's thought, however repugnant the thought, is unconstitutional."

Justice Shirley Abrahamson argued in dissent that the law "ties discriminatory selection of a victim to conduct already punishable by state law in a manner sufficient to prevent erosion of First Amendment protection of bigoted speech and ideas."

Justice William Bablitch's dissent charged that the court's majority has decided "that the same Constitution which does not protect discrimination in the marketplace does protect discrimination that takes place during the commission of a crime."

OSI BEGINS DENATURALIZATION CASE AGAINST FORMER SS MAN LIVING IN N.Y.

NEW YORK, June 24 (JTA) -- The Justice Department has begun denaturalization proceedings against a Putnam County, N.Y., resident suspected of participating in the mass murder of Jews in Poland during World War II as a member of the Trawniki SS unit.

A complaint against Jack "Jakob" Reimer, 73, was filed in U.S. District Court in Manhattan by the Office of Special Investigations of the Department's criminal division and the U.S. Attorney's office for the Southern District of New York.

It accuses him of willfully concealing his Nazi activities to gain entry into the United States in 1952 and obtain U.S. citizenship in 1959.

The action was immediately commended by the Anti-Defamation League, which observed that "the work of the OSI remains crucially important.

"No one should be allowed to gain the blessing and benefits of American citizenship by means of covering up involvement in mass murder and crimes against humanity," said Elliot Welles, director of the ADL's Task Force on Nazi War Criminals.

According to the complaint, Reimer admitted under oath to OSI attorneys last month that he served in the Trawniki SS unit, that its purpose was to assist the Nazi liquidation of Jews and that as a member, he participated in the destruction of the Jewish ghettos in Warsaw and Czestochowa in Poland.

The OSI also alleges that Reimer admitted participating in a mass execution of Jews in the vicinity of Trawniki, Poland, in 1941 or 1942 and that he personally fired his rifle into a group of 40 to 60 Jews forced into a mass grave.

Reimer, Ukrainian by birth, received German citizenship in 1944. Before his retirement he was a restaurant manager and distributor of snack foods.

The action initiated against him was a sign that, despite recent criticism, the OSI's Nazi-hunting days are far from over.

Just last week, the unit initiated denaturalization proceedings against Jonas Stelmokas, a retired Philadelphia architect charged with having been a high-ranking officer who helped Nazis murder Lithuanian Jews during World War II.

The agency is under investigation for the quality of the evidence it used to deport John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian-born former resident of Cleveland, to Israel to stand trial as the alleged Treblinka death camp guard known as "Ivan the Terrible."

OSI Director Neal Sher said the Reimer case is only one of several his unit is planning to initiate this summer. He said that 42 Nazis or collaborators have been stripped of U.S. citizenship to date as a result of OSI investigations. Of those, 30 have been expelled from the country. Sher said OSI has 500 investigations in progress.