

LABOR MAKES PROGRESS WITH SHAS IN BUILDING COALITION GOVERNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 6 (JTA) -- Yitzhak Rabin's efforts to assemble a government are going well, with officials from Labor and other parties saying a coalition could be in place as early as Wednesday.

By Monday night, progress was again being claimed with the right-wing Tsomet party. Papering over the political gap between Tsomet and the left-wing Meretz bloc is one of the larger challenges faced by those drafting the new government's policy guidelines.

After Meretz, acknowledged by Rabin as Labor's natural ally, the second party to sign on to a Labor coalition is expected to be Shas, the ultra-Orthodox, or haredi, Sephardic party. The other haredi party, United Torah Judaism, is also expected to come on board.

Laying the groundwork for the expected alliance, Shas leader Arye Deri has solemnly pledged in writing to resign from the Cabinet in the event that criminal charges are brought against him.

Deri, who is interior minister in the outgoing Likud government, has been under police investigation for two years for alleged improper funneling of funds from his ministry, through local authorities, to Shas-related institutions.

Deri, who is the youngest Cabinet minister in Israel's history, is also under investigation for personal financial improprieties.

Deri's promise, delivered to Rabin in writing, was touted by the premier-to-be as representing "new norms in the behavior of ministers in such situations."

Rabin said the Shas leader had wanted to "set an example" even before the government was formed.

Hard-Line Demands From Tsomet

Before Rabin's public announcement Monday, Deri himself told reporters that "circles in the Likud" were seeking to upset the coalition negotiations.

Rabin consulted with Attorney General Yosef Harish before reaching his agreement with Deri.

The Labor Party leader made a point of criticizing the investigation of Deri for continuing two years without a conclusion. "Such matters need to be speeded up in the future," he said.

Rabin's announcement seemed likely to head off speculation that Deri's legal situation was itself a covert subject of the coalition negotiations.

Political sources say the state attorney's office is likely to press charges against Deri in regard to the transfers of government funds, regardless of the conclusions reached concerning personal malfeasance.

Sealing Shas, along with Meretz, into the coalition would give Labor 62 seats in the Knesset, enough for a viable, albeit narrow, coalition.

That possibility was being publicly floated over the weekend, in an apparent effort to weaken Tsomet's bargaining position.

Tsomet, which Rabin wants in his coalition to balance the left-wing Meretz, had submitted a

series of hard-line policy positions during negotiations last Friday.

If a three-party coalition were formed initially, Labor would leave open Cabinet posts for a limited period while continuing talks with Tsomet, the haredi United Torah Judaism and the National Religious Party.

The NRP, which with the failure of Tehiya to enter the Knesset has become the last redoubt of the Gush Emunim settler movement, seems the least likely to find a formula that would bridge its position on the territories with that of Labor.

Over the weekend, Rabin told the NRP's Zevulun Hammer, who is the outgoing education minister, to forget any idea of Labor dropping Meretz in favor of an NRP-instigated bloc of right-of-center parties that would include Tsomet and the haredim.

Nevertheless, joining the opposition would not be easy for the NRP, which has been a member of every Israeli government and controlled the Ministry of Religious Affairs since 1948.

NRP officials have pointed out that new chief rabbis will be elected next year, and the party holding the Religious Affairs Ministry will naturally have influence over the course of those elections. Shas is likely to take over that ministry if NRP stays out.

LAWMAKERS PRESSING ADMINISTRATION ON LOAN GUARANTEES, U.N. RESOLUTION

By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, July 6 (JTA) -- A bipartisan group of members of the U.S. House of Representatives is urging President Bush to seize the Labor Party victory in Israel as an opportunity to take quick action on Israel's longstanding request for \$10 billion in U.S.-guaranteed loans.

Meanwhile, 28 senators have sent a letter to the administration asking for a clarification of its position on U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194. The controversial 1948 measure includes calls for the repatriation of Palestinians to Israel and the internationalization of Jerusalem.

Edward Djerejian, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, stated plainly in testimony before a congressional committee last week that the administration is taking no position on "specific issues until the new Israeli government is formed, the new prime minister enunciates his policies" and the two governments begin formal contacts.

Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin has said he hopes to assemble his government by the time the new Knesset convenes for the first time Monday.

But the congressional letters appear to be meant more to register concern than to elicit substantive policy responses.

In fact, it is widely expected that at least some part of the loan package will be granted before the U.S. elections in November. Such a deal could be announced after a visit here by Rabin, whose election victory Bush has warmly welcomed.

The Bush administration had conditioned the loan guarantees on a freeze in the construction of Jewish settlements in the administered territories. But outgoing Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Sha-

mir's refusal to yield on the issue led to a collapse in the talks aimed at forging a deal.

Rabin is notably more flexible on the question of settlements.

Still, the House members wanted to go on record in support of the guarantees, which Israel would use to obtain commercial loans for immigrant absorption.

'Shot In The Arm' For Israel

"Rabin won a mandate for change and for progress," said Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah), one of the original sponsors of the letter. Providing loan guarantees quickly would "help turn around Israel's economic situation and give a shot in the arm to U.S.-Israel relations, which will in turn boost Israel's confidence with regard to taking risks in the peace process."

"As more time passes without American guarantees for these loans, immigrants who have sought new lives in Israel suffer from the shortage of jobs and housing," the letter said.

"Having played so important a role in freeing Soviet Jews, the United States ought to follow through by guaranteeing these loans."

The missive from the Senate side, initiated by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), was drafted in response to an apparent misstep in May by State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

Tutwiler set off a firestorm of protest from pro-Israel quarters when she said the United States stands by the 1948 U.N. resolution.

She later retrenched, saying that issues such as Jerusalem's final status and the repatriation of Palestinians "can only be resolved through a process of direct negotiations among the parties themselves."

But the senators argued in their letter that ambiguity persists. "The issue of the Palestinian 'right of return' goes to the very heart of Israel's existence," they wrote. Ambiguity on this question, in particular, "only heightens fear in Israel and emboldens Arab radicals, thereby undercutting the peace process."

ISRAEL RELEASES ARAB PRISONERS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force has confirmed the release of 10 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons since their capture in Lebanon in 1985.

Reports of their release came from Arab and then International Red Cross sources last week, but the IDF had then responded with a laconic "no comment."

There has been no confirmation that these prisoner releases were tied with Israel's ongoing efforts to secure the release of an Israeli airman, Ron Arad, believed held either in Lebanon or Iran, or any other Israelis captured in Lebanon in the 1980s.

The IDF stresses that the released prisoners had all been held for unspecified offenses not directly related to terrorist activities, and were all freed on completion of their sentences. There was no reference or connection made with negotiations for hostages.

The Red Cross announced last week that it had helped 10 Palestinian prisoners reach Switzerland and provided them with necessary documents to continue to a destination of their choice.

The organization identified the released prisoners as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

ADL OBJECTS TO FARRAKHAN GUARD BEING HIRED TO PATROL L.A. PROJECT By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, July 6 (JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League is protesting the hiring of a security service affiliated with the Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan to patrol a federally subsidized housing project in the Venice area of western Los Angeles.

A contract between the Alliance Housing project and Farrakhan's Nation of Islam security branch, not yet signed but described as a "done deal," was negotiated under guidelines monitored and approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In a letter to HUD Secretary Jack Kemp, ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman, said, "The Nation of Islam and its leader, Louis Farrakhan, have a record of racism, anti-Semitism and hate matched by few groups."

"It would be as inappropriate for the Ku Klux Klan or any other racist group to be providing security under government contract as it would be for the Nation of Islam," he said.

Foxman said there would likely be heightened tensions between the guards and non-minority people in the racially mixed project and neighborhood, if subjected to the Nation of Islam's authority.

David Lehrer, the ADL Western states director, said that Farrakhan's security service "does not have a stellar record, and its employment would be like asking the fox to guard the chicken coop."

Irv Rubin, national leader of the militant Jewish Defense League, said his group would demonstrate in front of HUD offices and seek an injunction before the contract goes into force.

Under terms of the \$54,000-a-month contract with Nation of Islam Security, seven pairs of guards would patrol the project's 15 subsidized apartment buildings overnight from Wednesday through Sunday, according to ADL officials and a Los Angeles Times report.

The apartment buildings, infested with drug dealing and sporadic gang violence, are in a once predominantly black neighborhood now undergoing a process of gentrification. During the recent Los Angeles riots, several new condominiums in the area were vandalized and one was torched.

According to the Times, a HUD spokesman in Washington said he had not yet seen the ADL letter, but that any reports of anti-Semitism or racism would be "investigated and dealt with."

Six months ago, a similar controversy erupted when the housing project's management announced it would hire the security firm. After Jewish protests at the time, HUD ordered the reopening of bidding for the guards.

AMI AYALON IS NEW NAVAL COMMANDER

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA) -- Ami Ayalon, a 47-year-old decorated veteran of the Israeli navy, took over as its commander Monday at a ceremony in Haifa.

Ayalon, who has been promoted to the rank of major general, takes over from Rear Admiral Micha Ram, who is resigning from active service.

Ayalon has served his entire military service in the navy, after volunteering for the Naval Command following his induction in 1963.

Ayalon is a graduate of Bar-Ilan University and of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH CENTER FOUNDED TO FURTHER THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, July 6 (JTA) -- A new Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding has been established at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn., to intensify theological dialogue between the two faiths and to enable cooperative work on social issues of mutual concern.

The center was founded by Jewish, Catholic and Protestant clerics, theologians and academics who work in interreligious affairs.

It is being led by Jack Bemporad, a Reform rabbi from Long Island, who said that the center was born out of frustration with an Orthodox Jewish prohibition against discussing theological topics in interreligious dialogue.

Recent developments, said Bemporad, indicate that Catholic-Jewish relations would benefit even more if the two groups could discuss theology with one another.

He cited the Vatican's expected statements on the Holocaust and on "theology on Jews and Judaism" as two documents that should have Jewish input.

"You can't hold a position that we can't talk about these things and then complain when they come out with things not to our liking. We have to talk to them before, not after" they finish them, said Bemporad.

"The bottom line is that we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by having these discussions," he said. "Their positions will affect 900 million Catholics for the next 500 years. Our study center will help."

The prohibition against discussing theology that Bemporad called frustrating derives from the principle that underlies Orthodox involvement in two major Jewish organizations that conduct interfaith discussions.

They are the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, which is charged with officially representing the Jewish community to the non-Jewish world, and one of its member agencies, the Synagogue Council of America, a coalition of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis.

An 'Excuse To Missionize'

The principle, known as the Soloveitchik doctrine, is based on a 1964 essay by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, a leading Orthodox interpreter of Jewish law.

It stated that since non-Jews have confronted Jews "in a mood of defiance, as if we were part of the subhuman objective order," dialogue must be limited to social and political issues.

That position has led interreligious activists to avoid any subject deemed theological by the Orthodox participants.

"The Jewish memory of the 'disputations' against the Jewish people are strong," said Rabbi Marc Angel, honorary president of the Rabbinical Council of America, a mainstream Orthodox organization.

Referring to the medieval theological debates in which Jews were forced to participate, Angel said they were "an excuse to missionize and discredit Jews. We got a lot of deep scars from (them). What we should be talking about (with Christians) are common agenda items -- humanitarian things."

Those who say that the Soloveitchik doctrine

no longer reflects the reality of Catholic positions note that Soloveitchik wrote his essay before the Second Vatican Council issued a document called *Nostra Aetate* in 1965.

Nostra Aetate redefined the Catholic understanding of Jews and Judaism, ending the teaching of contempt and "official" Catholic anti-Semitism. The document laid the foundation for a closer working relationship between Jews and Catholics than had previously existed.

'There Is A Change' Among Catholics

One of the center's board members is an Orthodox rabbi who re-evaluated the Soloveitchik doctrine in light of recent changes in Catholic views.

Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz of Congregation Agudath Shalom in Stamford, Conn., said that the relationship is "on a different level today than it was in 1964."

He pointed out, in particular, that Pope John Paul II "has made certain recent statements indicating that there are two covenants God made: one with Moses at Sinai and one with Jesus at Cavalry."

"By following the Torah, you gain salvation," he says. So there's no longer any reason for a Catholic to try and persuade a Jew to give up his faith.

"Both (the Jewish and Catholic) communities remain ignorant of what the pope is trying to do. It's important for Jews to know that there is a change, and that we should capitalize on the feelings that are prevalent now."

Bemporad emphasized that the center will not be competing with the work of IJCIC or the Synagogue Council, but rather will try to complement it.

"IJCIC has a special role representing the spectrum of the organized religious community interfacing with the organized non-Jewish world at the international level," said Elan Steinberg, spokesman for IJCIC Chairman Edgar Bronfman.

"That's recognized by our counterparts, and I don't think any other group pretends to represent the entire Jewish community," he said. "I wish all institutions that do good work the best of luck."

Though based at the Catholic Sacred Heart University, the center is financially independent, and its first-year budget of \$500,000 is being raised from individuals and foundations, according to Bemporad.

Mission To Poland Planned

The center's first activity will be to lead a delegation of Jews and Catholics to Poland from July 19 to 24 to hold commemorative ceremonies at Auschwitz and to meet with Polish Catholic officials and help them develop seminary materials on Judaism, according to Bemporad.

The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding will also host its first conference, November 2-3, which will be devoted to Christian understanding of Jews and Judaism.

The new center's board of directors and consultants include: Dr. Eugene Fisher, director of Catholic-Jewish relations for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; Archbishop William Keeler, the conference's vice president; Schubert Ogden of Southern Methodist University; Rev. John Pawlikowski of Catholic Theological Union; and Rabbi A. James Rudin, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

MARC TANENBAUM, DEAD AT AGE 66, PIONEERED INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, July 6 (JTA) -- Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, an architect of modern Christian-Jewish dialogue and one of the most widely respected representatives of the Jewish community on interreligious matters, is dead at age 66.

Tanenbaum, who was buried Monday, died of heart failure July 3 after undergoing heart surgery here last month.

In the more than 40 years which he devoted to forging understanding between Jews and Christians, Tanenbaum earned the respect of religious leaders all over the world for his commitment, wisdom and sensitivity.

He forged close relationships with Christians from a wide range of denominations, including Pope John XXIII, the Rev. Billy Graham and Desmond Tutu, the black Anglican archbishop of Johannesburg.

Some 2,000 people representing many faiths attended Tanenbaum's funeral at Manhattan's Park Avenue Synagogue. Pews were filled with clergy wearing the garb of Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox priests.

Among those delivering eulogies was Cardinal John O'Connor, the archbishop of New York.

Tanenbaum was an indefatigable advocate of better understanding among faiths.

Though he retired in 1989 from the American Jewish Committee, where he worked as interreligious affairs director and director of international relations for 30 years, Tanenbaum continued to crisscross the country, speaking at universities and seminaries until illness forced him to stop earlier this year.

Tanenbaum first investigated Christian anti-Semitism while a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which he attended after graduating from Yeshiva University.

His interest, said colleagues, was fueled by his own memories of Eastern European pogroms and the Holocaust. Tanenbaum's parents fled Europe and settled in Baltimore, where he was born in 1925.

Observed Second Vatican Council

After his ordination as a Conservative rabbi in 1950, Tanenbaum briefly worked in publishing and public relations, and then went on to become one of the first Jewish professionals to devote himself full time to Christian-Jewish relations.

He worked in the late 1950s as executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, a body of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews that represents the American Jewish community in interfaith dialogue, and went to work for the American Jewish Committee in 1960.

A measure of his accomplishment even at that relatively early point in Tanenbaum's career is that he was invited to Rome by Pope John XXIII as an official observer of the Second Vatican Council, which lasted from 1960 to 1965.

He was the only rabbi to attend the proceedings that produced the watershed Catholic document *Nostra Aetate*. The document rejected anti-Semitism and the teaching that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus.

Tanenbaum hosted a syndicated weekly radio show on religious matters beginning in 1965, and wrote a weekly column for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency during the 1980s.

In 1983, Tanenbaum was the first Jewish

leader to address 4,000 Protestant delegates attending the World Council of Churches assembly in Vancouver.

And in the early 1980s, Tanenbaum was a member of an International Rescue Committee delegation which made three trips to Southeast Asia to research the plight of the Vietnamese boat people.

Upon reaching the Thai-Cambodian border, Tanenbaum joined Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel in the recitation of Kaddish for the 1 million Cambodians who were murdered by the Khmer Rouge.

He was also one of the founders in 1985 of the American Jewish World Service, a development and relief agency.

Made Declarations Come To Life

In 1987 he was elected chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, the body that represents the international Jewish community in its dealings with other religions.

And in May 1988, he was awarded the Interfaith Medallion by the International Council of Christians and Jews.

President Jimmy Carter invited Tanenbaum to represent American Jewry as one of 10 national religious and academic leaders to discuss "the State of the Nation" at the Camp David summit meetings in 1979. He was also a member of the President's Commission on the Holocaust Advisory Committee.

His passing has been called the end of an era by many of those who worked with him.

"He really took the declarations and resolutions and proclamations and made them come to life in human terms with an extraordinary amount of passion and intelligence," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, the current interreligious affairs director at the American Jewish Committee.

"One of the things I learned from him is that interreligious relations are really about human relationships," he said.

His commitment was not to good relations with Christians at any cost, according to his friend of 25 years, Rabbi Arnold Turetsky, but to creating a fuller Christian understanding of Jews and Judaism without sacrificing his own integrity.

"Marc spoke out, he risked his newly gained friendships with the highest-power Christians in the world. His mission was not to befriend Christians, but to bring his people to a sense of pride," said Turetsky.

HOSPITAL WORKERS END STRIKE

TEL AVIV, July 6 (JTA) -- Medical and administrative employees at five government hospitals have called off a strike begun Sunday, following a court ruling upholding efforts to begin privatizing the hospitals.

But the staffs of the major hospitals run by Histadrut's Kupat Holim sick fund continued to work a reduced Shabbat schedule Monday, protesting plans to decentralize the labor federation's health system.

The strike by government hospital workers ended Sunday evening after the National Labor Court upheld the legality of a directive issued by Health Minister Ehud Olmert.

The directive, which is part of the Likud government's privatization program, transforms government medical centers into autonomous economic units. Employees fear the move will reduce their salaries and increase their workloads.