

**RABIN OPENS KNESSET SESSION
WITH PASSIONATE CALL FOR PEACE**
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 18 (JTA) -- Against a hail of criticism from the opposition, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin opened the summer session of the Knesset this week with a rousing declaration of faith in peace over terror.

Rabin's speech, delivered on Monday to the sounds of heckling usually absent on such an occasion, focused on what he called his "government's determined peace policy."

This policy, he said, was the only one possible in light of the fact that "Israel has for 27 years dominated another people that wants nothing to do with us. For 27 years we have ruled over 1,800,000 people who wake every morning full of hatred towards us."

Describing Israeli-Arab relations over the past several decades, Rabin added that hatred was inevitable when one nation lorded it over another.

Both sides, said the prime minister, had paid a very heavy price for this hatred, particularly since the start of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, in December 1987.

In the ensuing violence, he said, 219 Israelis and more than 2,100 Arabs have been killed. He added that nearly 8,000 Israelis and 19,000 Arabs had been wounded since the intifada's start.

The terror attacks of recent months had been frightful, Rabin said, but there had been far worse incidents in the past.

Defending his government's policies against the repeated onslaughts of the Likud and other opposition parties, Rabin alluded to the 46 people who had died in a bus hijacking on the Coastal Road in 1978.

"Did anyone say the government of (Likud Prime Minister) Menachem Begin bore the blood of our people on its hands?" he asked.

"Did anyone demand that it resign?" he added, referring to the chants of right-wing demonstrators heard immediately after each recent terror attack.

Touching on future negotiations with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, the prime minister stressed that "the price of total withdrawal" that the Begin government had paid for peace with Egypt when Israel began handing over the Sinai in 1979 "will not be paid again. There will be a referendum," he promised, "before any substantial withdrawal from the Golan."

A Warning To Jordan

Repeating a charge he made last week, Rabin used the occasion to criticize Jordan for providing a safe haven for members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement. Hamas, a bitter opponent of the peace initiatives between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, has been behind many of the recent terror attacks.

Alluding to the high concentration of Hamas operatives in Jordan, Rabin said, "The Jordanian security authorities are aware of this, we are convinced. Yet they have allowed the Hamas to continue operating.

"We have therefore seen fit to warn Jordan that we expect the king to act against the Hamas murderers who will attempt to bring down his regime as well," the prime minister said.

At the Knesset session, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu reminded Rabin of his promise last summer, when Israel and the PLO had reached a tentative accord in Oslo, that an era of peace had dawned.

Instead, Netanyahu said, "we live in anxiety and fear in every town and settlement. The PLO has reneged on all its promises and is even in collusion with Hamas.

"Your peace train is running off the rails, blowing up in your face and you will go down in history as the man responsible for the creation of a Palestinian army of terrorists and the establishment of a Palestinian state," said the Likud leader.

When challenged by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and others to offer an alternative to the government's peace policy, Netanyahu said, "We believe in strengthening Israel," in adding "more and yet more settlements, and bringing in aliyah."

**ARAB TEEN WIELDS AX TO ATTACK
PASSENGERS ON A JERUSALEM BUS**
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 18 (JTA) -- In what was the fourth attack in two weeks on Israelis by members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, a 17-year-old Arab boarded a bus here on Monday and attacked passengers with an ax.

An Israeli soldier who was standing outside the bus shot at the attacker through the back door and wounded the assailant, who was subsequently detained by police.

Four passengers were injured in the incident, some by the attacker and others by stray bullets fired by the soldier.

Two of those injured were reported in moderate to serious condition, and two were only lightly wounded. The assailant was hit in the leg and received moderate injuries.

Hamas immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier this month, Hamas launched attacks in the Israeli towns of Afula, Ashdod and Hadera. Thirteen Israelis were killed and more than 70 were wounded in those terrorist incidents.

The latest assailant, whose name was not released because he is a minor, apparently boarded the bus somewhere between the central Jerusalem Mahaneh Yehuda market and the final stop in the suburb of Neveh Ya'acov, where the attack took place. Two Molotov cocktails, ready for use, were found in the attacker's pocket.

Police said the attacker had no criminal record and that he came from Shuafat, a Jerusalem suburb that borders on Neveh Ya'acov.

Neveh Ya'acov is a neighborhood of Jerusalem built shortly after 1967 beyond the Green Line, Israel's border before the Six-Day War.

Many of its residents are new immigrants, and two of those injured in the latest attack emigrated to Israel recently from the former Soviet Union.

NEWS ANALYSIS:

RAMON'S BID FOR HISTADRUT MAY SIGNAL START OF ISRAEL'S POLITICAL REALIGNMENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 18 (JTA) -- The usually dull Histadrut trade union elections are shaping up as the scene for the first act in Israel's long-awaited political realignment.

In a major political tremor, one of the Labor Party's brightest stars, former Health Minister Haim Ramon, has quit the party to launch an independent campaign to capture the Histadrut.

Ramon has eventual hopes to be prime minister, according to a broad consensus of politicians and political observers.

But Ramon's breakaway likely has implications reaching far beyond his personal political ambitions.

Some political observers say that a success -- even a relative success -- by Ramon's list in the Histadrut elections could prove to be the first step in the creation of a new, center-left party in Israel.

Such a development would not be a surprise in Israeli political circles.

Labor's present senior leaders, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, have been at their party's helm for two decades and have not groomed impressive successors among the next generation.

Recent changes in Israel's electoral system increases the role personal charisma, rather than traditional party loyalties, will play in the next national elections.

For the first time, contenders for the prime minister's post will have to be elected directly by the populace rather than be placed by insiders at the top of their party's list.

It has been widely predicted that the advent of peace, and the gradual application of electoral reforms, will bring about realignments on both sides of the political divide in Israel.

"Everyone understands that the day after peace breaks out -- all present party structures collapse," said Labor Knesset member and Ramon confidante Avraham Burg on Monday night.

Burg did not deny that he and others in Labor and Meretz, Labor's left-wing coalition partner, have been toying with the long-term prospect of forming a new Social Democratic Party, to be called Massad for its Hebrew acronym, to run in the 1996 elections.

Ramon has been joined in his split from Labor by two other rising Labor stars and Knesset members, Amir Peretz and Shmuel Avital.

New, Independent Party Expected

Under the Knesset regulations, three Knesset members are sufficient to form an independent party midway through the term, and that is what the three are expected to do.

On Sunday, Ramon's move gathered important momentum when Mapam, Labor's longtime leftist coalition partner, voted by a large majority to join with him in his bid to head the Histadrut.

Ramon's success was enhanced later the same night when Shas, the fervently Orthodox Sephardic party, announced that it, too, was joining forces with Ramon.

Ramon's list will include himself and his followers, and members of Meretz and Shas.

Ramon will be running against the incumbent secretary-general, longtime trade union bureaucrat Haim Haberfeld, and against the Likud challenger Yaakov Shamai.

Observers predict a sizable movement of support away from the Likud candidate and into the Ramon-Meretz-Shas camp. Histadrut voters who would not normally vote for a Labor candidate are expected to give their support to the anti-Labor, anti-establishment Ramon list.

That list is named "Haim Hadashim," meaning "new life," but also playing on the first name of both Ramon and his incumbent opponent.

More than 1.5 million Israelis are eligible to vote in the Histadrut elections, but turnout in the past has generally been low.

Observers do not necessarily predict an outright majority for Ramon; rather the likelihood that he and Haberfeld will each win less than 50 percent -- and will be forced into a coalition.

The main plank in Ramon's platform is the introduction of national health insurance legislation that would entail the separation of the Histadrut from its Kupat Holim Clalit health fund.

Ramon and his allies failed to win a majority for this program within the Labor Party.

They claim the rank-and-file supports them, but the party and Histadrut machine, which is strongly represented in Labor's national conference, ensured that the move was defeated.

Charges Of Anti-Democratic Procedures

Ramon's failure to push his health care reform package through the Labor Party led to his resignation in February as health minister.

Labor and Histadrut old-timers accuse Ramon and his supporters of seeking to destroy the Histadrut. But he counters that the Histadrut is ossified and needs a thorough shaking-up.

Specifically, Ramon argues that to link a person's health insurance to his or her union membership is anti-democratic.

Under the present system, a person joining Kupat Holim Clalit, which is the largest health fund and in many small towns and villages the only such fund, automatically becomes a member of the Histadrut.

This argument over the proper role of the Histadrut, and its connection to Kupat Holim, was conducted at Mapam's Sunday night central committee meeting in Tel Aviv.

Rabin made the case there for the old-style, Labor-led Histadrut, and Minister of Environment Yossi Sarid of the Ratz faction of Meretz urged the Mapam delegates to side with Ramon against the Labor "establishment."

Mapam, a longtime former component of Labor, joined with Ratz and the Shinui party in the last Knesset elections to form Meretz.

Rabin contended Sunday night that Ramon's "desertion" from Labor would weaken the government's peace policy.

Sarid countered that Mapam's refusal to join with the rest of Meretz in backing Ramon would weaken Meretz, which had consistently been the mainstay of that very peace policy.

By an unexpectedly large majority of 61 percent against 39, the Mapam committee voted to go with Ramon and the rest of Meretz.

Ramon himself said later that Rabin had been "pressured" by Haberfeld and other old-timers to appear before the Mapam delegates.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**GERMAN JEWS FEEL SHIFT TO RIGHT
AFTER FOUR YEARS OF REUNIFICATION**

By David Kantor

BONN, April 18 (JTA) -- Has Germany once again become a dangerous place for Jews to live?

The question has arisen with increasing frequency lately as policy-makers -- despite loud condemnations of anti-Semitic and xenophobic acts committed by the far right -- have failed to stop the violent campaign against Jews and non-Germans in this country.

And many Jews are scared. A Jewish woman from Cologne said recently that she saw "a sea change" in the climate of the country since German unification four years ago.

"The country has moved to the right, anti-Semitism has become fashionable," she said. "This is not a place for Jews to stay."

Her husband, a real estate dealer, also voiced concern, but said it is too early to say how bad the situation will ultimately become. For the time being, he said, the couple will remain in Germany.

But as many other Jewish families are doing, they have decided to send their children to a summer camp in England, so they would at least get familiar with the language and be prepared to move to an English school if the current situation deteriorates further.

Until now, Turks, Africans and members of other minorities who are "visibly" non-German and who came to the country as asylum-seekers or as foreign workers have generally been the targets of attacks by gangs of neo-Nazi youths.

But the Jews who live here, most of them German nationals, also consider themselves a potential target.

"They attack Turks," a Frankfurt Jewish activist said, "but their ultimate aim is the Jews. They want to rid the country of this tiny Jewish community, along with expelling millions of foreigners who have contributed to the wealth of postwar Germany."

Jewish Sites Well-Protected

Because of the continual potential for violence, synagogues and other Jewish community centers are well-protected in Germany. No prayer takes place without police guards standing by in front of the synagogue. Jewish kindergartens operate behind walls, with police guarding the entrances and routinely patrolling the area.

"This is a scandal we have shamefully adapted to," a member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Party, Herta Daeubler-Gmelin, said. "Normality would mean that Jews can hold a religious service" without police protection.

Last week, about 13 Jews and foreigners living in the Bavarian city of Nuremberg received forged letters purportedly sent from the federal office that deals with the status of refugees.

The letters informed the recipients that the difficult financial situation of Germany had made it impossible for the government to tolerate their continued presence in the country.

In addition to Jews, the letters were addressed to Yugoslavs, Turks and Vietnamese. All recipients were warned that failure to leave the country would lead to "solutions which you would have to bear the responsibility for."

Also last week, the German Interior Ministry made available its annual report on political extremism in the country.

The report named several right-wing parties -- including the Republicans, the National Democrats and the German League for People and Home -- as pursuing xenophobic policies. The report also described how many of the parties' members were actively engaged in spreading the notion that the Holocaust never took place.

But despite protests by various groups, the report failed to define the largest of these groups -- the 23,000-member Republicans -- as an extremist political group. Instead, it merely said the party, led by former SS officer Franz Schonhuber, showed "signs" of drifting to extremist positions.

As a result of the report's conclusions, members of the Republican Party will remain free of systematic observation by German intelligence.

The conclusion came down nearly at the same time that Jewish leaders here charged the Republicans with being morally responsible for inciting recent violent incidents, including the March 25 firebombing of a synagogue in the northern port city of Lubeck.

Another event which has contributed to Jewish fears about living in Germany was a recent ruling by a federal court that denial of the Holocaust -- the so-called "Auschwitz lie" -- does not in itself constitute an offense.

Groups of scholars, politicians and legal experts have come out in support of initiatives that would ban the "Auschwitz lie" more directly and make it impossible for potential offenders to get away without penalty.

But no draft has been yet presented to Parliament and it is far from sure that the initiative will get enough support for passage.

All this comes at a time when millions of Germans are flocking to see the Steven Spielberg film "Schindler's List" and remind themselves of their country's Nazi past. The film has led to a wave of emotional reactions among audiences.

ROMANIAN CHIEF RABBI SUFFERS STROKES

NEW YORK, April 18 (JTA) -- Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen has suffered two strokes in Bucharest and is being treated at a Bucharest hospital, Jewish groups here have reported.

The strokes, which he suffered April 9, partially paralyzed the 81-year-old rabbi on his left side. The chief doctor at the Elias Hospital in the Romanian capital said the rabbi was in stable condition but would make no predictions because of the patient's advanced age. Rosen has been able to speak since last Thursday.

Rosen, chief rabbi of Romania since 1948, has wielded extraordinary influence in that country as a religious leader and a frequent ambassador to the United States on behalf of Romania.

He enabled nearly the entire 400,000 Jews in postwar Romania to emigrate to Israel.

Rosen has kept up an astoundingly strong Jewish religious and cultural life in Romania with the extensive help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, providing kosher food, religious life and quality care for the elderly.

A JDC spokesman said, "The JDC, together with the community, took all the necessary steps to ensure that the services to the community continue uninterrupted."

U.S. CALLS PROGRESS DISAPPOINTING IN COMBATting ARAB BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL

By Steven Welss

WASHINGTON, April 18 (JTA) -- The Clinton administration said that progress in combatting Arab countries' adherence to the economic boycott of Israel has been "disappointingly slow," following the release of a boycott compliance report this week.

The quarterly report, released Friday by the U.S. Commerce Department, found that Arab countries honoring the boycott of Israel continue to violate U.S. anti-boycott laws at the same rate as last year.

"The United States will keep doing all it can to persuade the Arab League countries to discontinue their boycott," John Despres, assistant secretary of commerce for export enforcement, said in a statement Friday.

"So far that progress has been disappointingly slow," the statement read.

The Clinton administration and Jewish groups had hoped that boycott compliance would greatly diminish following the signing of the historic Israeli-Palestinian peace accord last September.

Reports since then, however, have continually indicated that the boycott is as strong as ever.

The boycott, which began before the formation of Israel in 1948, calls for Arab countries not to engage in trade with Israel. The secondary boycott calls for Arab countries not to do business with U.S. and international companies that do business with Israel.

It is compliance with this secondary boycott that the United States monitors closely. The Commerce Department report indicates how many requests were made to American companies for actions that are prohibited under U.S. anti-boycott laws.

President, Congress Urge End To Boycott

The Commerce Department's last boycott report, in December, showed a sharp increase in such requests, to the shock of Jewish groups.

The increase, however, was attributed to new language used by Saudi Arabia in certain bank documents. The controversial language has since been deleted, thus bringing reported boycott activity down. In the first quarter of this year, 813 requests were made, down from 965 in the last quarter of 1993.

President Clinton and Congress have each strongly urged the Arab League to end the boycott, and both houses of Congress passed legislation calling for the league to end the boycott.

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown received personal assurances from an Arab official that the Arab League would discuss ending the boycott at its March meeting, but the promise was not kept.

Will Maslow, editor of the American Jewish Congress's Boycott Report, predicted that fulfilling the Palestinian-Israeli autonomy accord will cause some Arab countries to ignore the boycott.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Department reported Friday that it cited four companies for anti-boycott compliance: Arab Bank PLC of New York; Boaleeco, a Massachusetts manufacturer and exporter of educational equipment; and two subsidiaries of Honeywell, Inc. allegedly furnished Arab countries with information on their business relationship with firms on the boycott blacklist.

BRITAIN ACCUSED OF LACKING WILL TO FIGHT RACISM AFTER BILL'S DEFEAT

By Bernard Josephs

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, April 18 (JTA) -- The British government has been accused by some of its own supporters of lacking commitment in the battle against racism, following the rejection in Parliament last week of tough new anti-racist legislation.

Parliament members from both sides of the House sharply criticized government ministers for opposing amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which would have created specific laws against racial violence and harassment.

Even the passing of the government's own amendment, which makes the production and distribution of racist publications an offense that could lead to arrest, did little to blunt their comments.

Two Jewish Conservative members of Parliament, Sir Ivan Lawrence and David Sumberg, voted against the government, led by their own party, by supporting an additional amendment to introduce longer sentences for crimes involving racially motivated violence.

The government's stand brought expressions of dismay from anti-racist groups, including the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism.

In a two-hour debate on April 12, the House considered a draft of anti-racist amendments, presented by Lawrence, who is chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, and backed mainly by the opposition.

'Present State Of The Law' Is Not Enough

Lawrence told the House that his committee, which is soon to publish a report on racial violence, believes that racism is spreading and that the situation is so serious "that the present state of the law is simply not enough."

He called for "a strong signal" of the authorities' intention to take the problem of racist violence seriously.

Home Office Minister Peter Lloyd made it clear in his reply that the government was opposed to the amendments.

There were angry mutterings when he said, "We do not want to bring about circumstances in which a mugged pensioner could say, however unfairly, that if he had been black, his assailant would have had to receive a much heavier sentence. Why introduce a potent source of misunderstanding?"

Sumberg, who with Lawrence and another Conservative member, Hugh Dykes, abstained in the voting, told the London Jewish Chronicle, "I felt there was a lack of commitment to take action and a feeling of complacency."

"Home Office officials are not sufficiently aware of the concerns of the Asian and Jewish communities. All is not well and I can't pretend it is," Sumberg said.

Dykes also said there was a lack of understanding among government leaders about the need to grapple with racism.

"People who are not affected by it do not realize how horrendous it is. We will continue to fight to toughen the law," he said.