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The Fight Continues

The arrival of Iosif Mendelevitch in Israel after more than 11 years in Soviet prisons and labor camps was a joyous occasion not only for the 33-year-old Orthodox Jew but also for all who have long supported the fight for emigration for Soviet Jews.

The harsh treatment Mendelevitch underwent in Soviet prisons was even worse than usual for Jewish Prisoners of Conscience. For Mendelevitch became an Orthodox Jew while in prison and sought to keep the Sabbath and other holidays and to observe kashrut. As Leon Dulzin, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives, said, Mendelevitch "suffered as an Orthodox Jew and as a Zionist."

His release should inspire us to continue the battle to free other Jewish Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, such as Anatoly Shcharansky and Ida Nudel; to work for the day when all Jews have the right to emigrate freely or to practice their Judaism openly in the USSR if they decide to remain.

Meanwhile the chapter that opened with the attempt by a group of Riga Jews to hijack a plane in 1970 so that they could flee the Soviet Union and go to Israel is not over. All the Jewish defendants in the Leningrad trial are free. But two non-Jews, Yuri Federov and Aleksei Murzhenko, are still in prison. They are not due for release until 1985 and 1984, respectively.

The Jewish community must not allow them to be forgotten. They joined in the hijack attempt and refused to bow to threats that they sign incriminating statements against their Jewish colleagues. When Eduard Kuznetsov and Mark Dymshits were sentenced to death, they made personal appeals for mercy. The death sentences were later reduced to 15 years under pressure of world public opinion.

The Jewish people owe these two men a debt which must be paid by fighting for them as hard as for Shcharansky, Nudel and others still held in the Soviet Union.

Behind The Scenes

At The United Nations

By David Horowitz

A World-Union Press Feature

Why Peres' Labor May Not Make It

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- "Let's not be so sure and bet on a Labor victory!"

Despite Israeli polls predicting a Labor landslide during the forthcoming election in July with Shimon Peres replacing Menachem Begin, a veteran Israeli political expert associated with the Labor Party and currently assigned to a vital UN body made the above remark in a

recent discussion with your correspondent on the problems facing the Israeli electorate this year.

This distinguished Israeli -- who for obvious reasons would prefer not to be named -- has been active in Israel's political life since Independence Day and is thus in an excellent position to know in what direction the Israeli political winds blow, even during these uncertain days galloping inflation stands highest among the many problems bedeviling the Yishuv.

He agreed with this writer that while the dire economic situation has struck the Israelis a deep blow, they realize that most nations around the world including the powerful United States have also been affected by inflation and therefore they cannot hold Begin's Likud Government specifically responsible for their economic plight. It's a world-wide 'disease.'

Israelis are used to tzena, austerity. To them, certainly to the greater majority, security remains the number one issue, and the Likud has made its stand quite clear as to exactly what the Yishuv's needs are on this grave issue. Indeed, if the Israelis were to choose today between Menachem Begin's 26-point autonomy plan for the territories and the plan which Shimon Peres has projected for the West Bank, a plan which calls for a partial partition of the region with a link to King Hussein's Jordan, there can be no doubt as to which plan they would prefer. They know, moreover, that Hussein has rejected any partial settlement and they also know that he continues to play up the PLO. He still has his heart on Jerusalem.

Again, Israelis in their majority are not too pleased with Shimon Peres' frequent trips abroad in attempts to curry the favor of such 'friends' of Israel as Bruno Kreisky of Austria and Giscard d'Estaing of France as also his flirtations with Sadat. All this is bound to work against Labor during the elections.

A noted Israeli lecturer and political columnist, Yosef Goell holds that approximately "forty per cent of the electorate remains undecided about whom to vote for." In a comprehensive report just released by the American Jewish Committee, Goell notes, among other things, that "the election campaign will in all likelihood be conducted around the twin issues of foreign policy and inflation" and he adds that "the Likud will attempt to push the line that Labor and Peres if elected, will 'sell out Eretz Israel' -- the West Bank and the Gaza Strip -- to Arafat, via King Hussein and Peres' 'Jordanian option.' Labor," he notes, "will blast away at the Likud Government's sorry performance and its responsibility for inflation, and for the first-ever real drop in Israelis' personal income recorded in 1980."

He cites 40 percent of the electorate as being "undecided." Actually, due to a massive shift in affiliation from parties during the past decade, it is the view of well-informed observers close to the Israeli political scene that close to 80 per cent of Israelis are bilti-miflagti, independent voters. In this regard, Goell says in his report that "the major political issues of the 1970's and 80's cut across party

lines. Thus they proved to be internally divisive within the leading parties rather than defining differences among them. Labor, the Likud and the National Religious Party (NRP) are all split down the middle, for instance on the major issue of the ultimate fate of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, settlement activities and even on the Camp David agreement and peace treaty with Egypt."

Discussing the elections, Shmuel Schnitzer of Ma'ariv pointed out recently that the "Labor Alignment possesses no magic charms against the destructive processes which undermine Israel's economy. It has no clear program for fighting inflation, nor does it have any short-term solution to the housing shortage which plagues young couples and new immigrants."

Yoel Marcus writing in Ha'aretz, "believes there are three problems facing the Labor Alignment. First it has not yet convinced the people that Shimon Peres' leadership will be superior to Menachem Begin's. Second, Labor's vocal demand for an absolute majority could become sticky and third not a peep was heard from Labor on cutting the defense budget or satisfying the teachers' demand for more money, leaving their views on the economy a mystery."

The veteran Israeli political expert was right: "Let's not be so sure and bet on a Labor victory."

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- A chair in journalism named in memory of the late Dr. Azriel Carlebach, founder and first editor of Maariv, was dedicated at Tel Aviv University, the 25th anniversary of his death. The chair, whose first incumbent is yet to be named, will deal with research into the press and its role in society.

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