

Middle East Report by Mark Burdman

The need for Navon

Yitzhak Navon is the main hope if Israel is to be rescued from Begin, Sharon, and the mobs they are cultivating.

With their perverse sense of irony, the same British families who installed Adolf Hitler in power 50 years ago in Germany have decided to bring a Hitler imitation into power in Israel during the course of 1983.

The success or failure of this plan, which is endorsed by the Soviet KGB and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, depends in large part on whether Israel's patriots take action in the weeks ahead to resolve their country's life-and-death economic, cultural, and political crises.

As depravity in high places and cultural pessimism have spread in Israel over the past months, the hopes of these patriots have increasingly focused on one man: President Yitzhak Navon. The central question has become whether Navon will attempt, as his presidential term nears its expiration in the spring of this year, to become the prime ministerial candidate for the opposition Labour Party in anticipated early elections sometime later this year.

Henry Kissinger met with Navon in New York on Jan. 12 to "inform" the Israeli President that it would not be in his best interest to run for the prime ministership.

On Dec. 27, eight days before Navon left Israel for the United States, a riot broke out in Jerusalem among the poorer sections of Israel's Sephardic (or Oriental) population.

As the violence spread, the rioters cried, "The Sephardic Revolution has begun!" They painted swastikas on the walls, accompanied by the words,

"Send the Ashkenazim to Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka!" "Ashkenazim" refers to that 35 percent of Israel's Jews who immigrated there from Europe. Many of these Ashkenazim came to Palestine to escape the Nazis.

The Dec. 27 riot was no isolated incident: British hatred for European Jewish culture, played out so evilly in Germany 40 years ago, is now being played out in Israel.

Israel has a 130-plus percent inflation rate, and the highest per capita debt in the world. The ruling Likud Party of Menachem Begin has no intention of economically upgrading its mass Sephardic popular base, but instead rallies this base with "Maccabean" tribal slogans. Given the cultural devastation these Sephardim experienced in their countries of origin, this is producing a fascist mob. They will acclaim Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, or perhaps a newcomer, as "King of Israel." The raised hands and the "Heils!" will follow.

The project is being financed by Christian "evangelicals" in California led by wheeler-dealer Terry Reisenhauer. They are putting together a \$100 million war chest for Israel to annex the West Bank, and for a synagogue to be built on Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where the Dome of the Rock mosque now stands.

Under conditions of deepening economic depression, the evangelicals are spreading the word that this Temple Mount Synagogue will usher in the Apocalypse foreseen in the Book of Revelations. Working with them

are Jewish Defense League chief Meir Kahane, Ariel Sharon, Robert Morgenthau, and Henry Kissinger.

Navon represents a pole of sanity in the midst of this irrationalism.

Navon is himself by origin Sephardic, since his family traces back to pre-Inquisition Spain, Morocco, and Jerusalem. But he represents a Sephardic who holds a deep love for European Renaissance culture, and therefore points the way to an alternative identity for Israel's Sephardim.

In the early 1950s, the young Navon was brought into political life by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Navon was fluent in Spanish, and Ben-Gurion wanted to learn Spanish to read Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in the original. Navon bolstered the better instincts of Ben-Gurion, who, at certain moments, realized the importance of universal principles of culture and statecraft for building a nation.

It was that element of cultural optimism of the 1948-65 "Ben-Gurion years" which was associated with the scientifically inclined "make the desert bloom" idea of many Israelis. That idea must be restored now, if Israel is not to descend into hell and possibly bring the world down with it.

As Israel's presidency is largely ceremonial, Navon's effect on Israel is currently more potential than actual. He is reportedly reticent to join the political fray, because of his awareness of how dirty Israeli politics has become. One hopeful sign is Navon's telegram to the founding conference of the Club of Life in October 1982, welcoming that organization's worldwide fight "for economic development and against cultural pessimism."

Will Navon now have the courage to respond to necessity and fight for these principles in Israel? The future of Israel and the region depends on it.