

Top Secret

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Monday April 11, 1977

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ISRAEL: Peres Endorsement

[] Following the Israeli Labor Party's endorsement yesterday of Defense Minister Peres as its candidate for prime minister, party leaders are trying to achieve some measure of unity between Peres and those groups within the coalition Labor Alignment that have long opposed him. The party is working under great pressure because its final list of parliamentary nominees must be presented by tomorrow.

[] Peres reportedly has offered Foreign Minister Allon the second spot on the party's parliamentary list and assured him the defense portfolio, the government's second most powerful position. This appears to be a move designed to placate Allon's left-wing faction and to mollify disgruntled supporters of former prime minister Rabin, who favored Allon over Peres for the party's top spot. In a further gesture to the party's powerful old-guard leadership, Rabin himself will apparently be given a "safe" place on Labor's electoral list.

[] Former foreign minister Eban, a well-known member of the party's left-wing but a political ally of Peres, reportedly has been offered his old portfolio. Peres probably hopes that this, combined with his offer to Allon, will help win over the support of the party's left wing and, even more important, Mapam, Labor's long-time partner in the Alignment.

[] Despite Peres' efforts, Mapam's intentions remain the biggest question mark. It has long opposed Peres because of his hawkish stance on negotiations with the Arabs, especially over the West Bank. At its party convention earlier this year, Mapam went on record as favoring withdrawal from the Alignment if Peres gained the Labor Party nomination.

[] To preserve its option to run independently in the May national election, over the weekend Mapam secured the approval of the parliament's election committee to be recognized as a separate party. Mapam leaders reportedly will meet today to make a final decision on the matter. []