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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

BRITAIN NOW FIRMLY COMMITTED TO A 'LAND FOR THE PALESTINIANS' By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Britain is now firmly committed to a "land for the Palestinians" as an essential component of a Middle East settlement. The phrase, first used in the UN General Assembly by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland on Oct. 5, is now a stock phrase in British official thinking about the Middle East.

However, Whitehall is deliberately vague about what "a land for the Palestinians" entails. As Crosland put it, it would "not necessarily be a sovereign state but a place where the Palestinians will be free to look after their own affairs." In using this language, Britain is taking account of the complexity of the Palestinian issue, while adhering to the collective formula of its European Common Market partners.

It also maintains that an Arab-Israeli settlement must be based on what has been called "full implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 through the negotiations called for in Resolution 338." Britain is also ready to play a role in peace-keeping or negotiations if asked to do so.

Economic Calculations Dominate

Above all, though, Britain's Middle East policy is dominated by economic calculations. Last year the area was the source of 85 percent of her imported oil. Bilateral links with Middle East oil producers are particularly important in view of their holdings in Sterling. Middle East sources help to meet Britain's public-sector foreign currency borrowing program and there is considerable private investment in Britain by individuals in the area.

On the trade front, the Middle East is the fastest-growing export market in the world for British companies. Trade with Arab countries rose from 500 million Pounds Sterling in 1973 to nearly 1500 million Pounds Sterling in 1975. This year it may exceed 2000 million Pounds Sterling.

During 1975 and the first quarter of 1976, the value of British exports to Arab countries increased more than those of any other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development exporter. Exports to Israel are also significant: 237 million Pounds Sterling in 1975 and 181 million Pounds Sterling to the end of September, according to official quarters.

Although Britain remains publicly committed to supporting the United Nations and its Charter, it is recognized that the UN's position as regards the Arab-Israeli question has further declined due to last year's resolution equating Zionism with racism, which is still condemned here without reservation.

8 TERRORIST CELLS UNCOVERED

TEL AVIV, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Israeli security forces uncovered eight terrorist cells in the Judea and Samaria regions of the West Bank and detained 66 of their members, an army

spokesman announced tonight. Four of the cells were linked to El Fatah, three to Naif Hawatmeh's Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and one to Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front-General Command.

An El Fatah cell was discovered in Hebron after an Arab youth was killed while preparing a bomb. Two other Fatah cells were found in the Nablus area and the others near Ramallah and in Jalazoun village in Samaria. Large quantities of arms and explosives were seized.

LABOR ALIGNMENT URGES KATZIR TO ALLOW PRESENT RABIN GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE AS CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

By Yitzhak Shargil, Gil Sedan and Tuvia Mendelson

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)--The Labor Alignment urged President Ephraim Katzir today to allow the present government of Premier Yitzhak Rabin to continue as a caretaker government until an early election is held. But the Alignment said that if Katzir decides to name someone to try to find a majority in the Knesset to head a new government it should be Rabin.

The Alignment position was presented by a delegation headed by Labor Minister Moshe Baran who met with Katzir as he began consultations with the various political parties. He was scheduled to meet this afternoon with the opposition Likud which is expected to urge that he name its leader, Menachem Begin, to try to form a new government. Katzir is scheduled to meet with the National Religious Party and the Torah Front tomorrow and complete his consultations this week. If he names someone to form a government it must be done in a mandatory 21-day period.

However, all this may be academic. The Knesset is expected to dissolve itself this week and schedule a new election. Both the Alignment and Likud are expected to introduce bills to this effect, the only difference being that the government wants the election to take place May 31 and Likud wants it May 3. The two groups are scheduled to meet tomorrow to seek a compromise, probably May 17.

If the election is scheduled, all steps to form a new government are automatically halted and the present government continues in a caretaker role until after the election.

Gearing For The Campaign

Meanwhile, Israel's political parties are gearing for the upcoming campaign while the Labor Alignment appears to be heading for a battle over who should lead it, Rabin or Defense Minister Shimon Peres. Peres has not made an official declaration of his candidacy but he did announce his intentions to Labor Party leaders over the weekend. He said that unless the present setup is changed, Labor will lose 15 seats and he felt that if he was at the helm, this deterioration could be stopped.

The Defense Minister revealed that he had rejected an offer, reportedly from Begin, that he become Premier of an alternative government. "If I wanted it, I could have been Premier

now," he told Labor leaders.

Peres also asked Meir Talmi, secretary general of Mapam, whether he would oppose him as Premier. Talmi gave an evasive answer saying that Mapam has not adopted a resolution on Peres and Mapam makes every effort to remain out of Labor Party power struggles. However, many members of Mapam have said they could not accept Peres as Premier. Mapam itself is scheduled to decide whether to pull out of the Labor Alignment as many of its younger members want.

Rabin Confident Of Leading Labor Party

Rabin, meanwhile, appears to be confident that he will continue to head the Labor Party. In an interview Friday, he stressed that if he is named Premier again "there is no doubt that I consider Shimon Peres as one of the senior members in my next Cabinet."

Rabin had top leaders of the Labor Party at his home yesterday to plan organization and strategy for the election. Among them were Foreign Minister Yigal Alon, Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz, Israel Galili, and Peres. The Defense Minister said nothing of his challenge to Rabin at the meeting. Also present was former Premier Golda Meir, whose presence was seen as lending her moral support to Rabin.

The announcement by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban that he is a candidate for the Premiership is expected to help Peres since Eban would presumably take away votes from Rabin. Rabin is expected to ask for an early decision by Labor's central committee, the group that named him Premier originally. Peres is expected to press for a decision by the Labor Party convention, a much larger group.

Belgin Challenges Rabin To TV Debate

Belgin, meanwhile, spoke to the Liberal Workers Union of the Histadrut last week and challenged Rabin to face him in a televised debate. He said they should discuss the strategic diplomatic front and the internal moral and social problems. Belgin pledged to wipe out poverty. The Likud leader noted that there are many new candidates for the post of Premier and "when I look at all the other candidates for the post of Premier I have no inferiority complex."

Rabin and NRP leader Yitzhak Rafael, in interviews in Yediot Achronot Friday, both said that the present government crisis does not mean that the NRP will not be a coalition partner of the Labor Alignment in a future government. The present crisis arose when Rabin expelled the three NRP ministers, including Rafael who was Minister of Religious Affairs, from the Cabinet.

But Rafael said that when the NRP returns to the government its demands will be more rigid. He said Rabin will be sorry for what he did and blamed Justice Minister Haim Zadok for advising Rabin to oust the NRP.

Meanwhile, Rafael is coming under attack from former Interior Minister Yosef Burg and the younger members of the NRP who want to undermine the position of Rafael's faction in the NRP. Younger members of the Independent Liberal Party are also criticizing the leadership of its traditional leaders, Tourism Minister Moshe Kol and Minister-Without-Portfolio Gideon Hausner. Some of the young ILP members are threatening to accept the proposal of Prof. Yigal Yadin to join his newly-formed Democratic

Movement.

CARETAKER CABINET TRIES TO UNRAVEL LEGAL COMPLICATIONS STEMMING FROM COALITION CRISIS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)-- The caretaker Cabinet convened for the first time today to try to unravel a mesh of legal complications arising from last week's coalition crisis. It is purely a Labor Alignment Cabinet. Absent from today's session were the two Independent Liberal Party ministers, Moshe Kol and Gideon Hausner, who resigned only hours before Premier Yitzhak Rabin submitted his government's resignation to President Ephraim Katzir last week.

Also missing were the National Religious Party ministers dismissed by Rabin--Yitzhak Rafael and Zevulun Hammer--and Yosef Burg who resigned when his colleagues were forced out.

The status of these five ministers has become the subject of legal actions which Justice Minister Chaim Zadok explained at today's Cabinet meeting. State Attorney General Aharon Barak has obtained an order nisi challenging Kol's and Hausner's resignations. Another court order, issued at the request of two private attorneys--Zalman Segal and Eliezer Steinlauf--questions the validity of Rabin's ouster of the NRP ministers. The latter were dismissed on grounds that they had failed to support the government on a motion of no-confidence.

Court Ruling Awaited

According to the law, the dismissal of ministers on those grounds becomes effective "from the day" the government informs the Knesset of its action. The resignations of the NRP ministers were demanded by Rabin at the opening of last Sunday's Cabinet meeting. Rabin informed the Knesset on Monday morning and he resigned himself shortly before midnight Monday.

According to the two lawyers "from the day" means as of midnight, and, they argue, the NRP ministers were members of the Cabinet at the hour Rabin resigned. Since the law stipulates that members of a caretaker Cabinet cannot resign or be dismissed, the NRP ministers are, in the view of these lawyers, members of the caretaker government.

Although Kol and Hausner resigned from the regular Cabinet, the law says that a minister's resignation becomes effective only 48 hours after it is submitted. Therefore, according to Barak, the ILP ministers are technically members of the caretaker regime from which they cannot resign. Both cases await a final ruling by the Supreme Court.

CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)-- Thousands of Christian pilgrims and visitors came to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem amid heavy security precautions. Security forces, including local policemen, police reserves from elsewhere in the country and soldiers surrounded Manger Square to search everyone who entered. At the outskirts of town, police checked the special entry permits which were issued to visitors.

The ceremonies opened Friday afternoon as Latin Patriarch Giacomo Beltritti led a procession from Jerusalem to the Church of the

Nativity. A police band and other local bands played in the square as thousands of pilgrims waited for the Patriarch to arrive. He was preceded by a large contingent of Franciscan monks, local dignitaries and choir boys dressed in red and black robes.

At midnight Friday, the Patriarch conducted the High Pontifical Mass. Thousands of visitors who could not get into the church watched the mass on a large closed circuit television screen in the square. Those who could not attend the midnight mass attended one of the many masses celebrated in the Grotto of the Nativity Friday night and Saturday.

Walked 7000 Kilometers

The live TV broadcast of the midnight mass was carried out according to schedule. Radio and television broadcasting returned to normal Friday afternoon after a 36-hour interruption caused by transmission engineers leaving their posts. Communications Minister Aaron Uzan issued the back-to-work orders Friday morning.

An interesting event during the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem was the arrival of a 32-year-old Englishman, Francis Clark-Lowies who walked 7000 kilometers for a year-and-a-half from London to Bethlehem for Christmas eve.

Clark-Lowies arrived at the Allenby Bridge on Friday. He told Tourism Ministry spokesmen that he set out in August 1975 and made his way through Europe and then continued by way of Turkey, Syria and Jordan. With the exception of the English Channel and the Bosphorus he walked all the way to Bethlehem. His 15-kilo knapsack contained clothing, sleeping bag and cooking equipment. He intends to stay in Israel for three months and work as a volunteer in a kibbutz.

17 SOVIET JEWISH ACTIVISTS RELEASED; 30 HELD TO STOP THEM FROM ATTENDING VIGIL MARKING FIRST LENINGRAD TRIAL

NEW YORK, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Soviet authorities released 17 Jewish activists held under house arrest but detained 30 others on Friday to prevent them from attending a vigil outside the Lenin Library to mark the sixth anniversary of the first Leningrad hijack trial, Jewish sources in Moscow reported.

The 17 who were permitted to leave their homes after four days under police guard were organizers of the symposium on the state of Jewish culture in the USSR. The symposium, scheduled to last three days, convened briefly on Tuesday but was forced to adjourn because its leaders were arrested. Would-be participants from the U.S., Israel and other countries were refused entry to the Soviet Union. According to Jewish sources, over 100 persons were detained for varying periods last week to prevent the symposium from taking place.

A number of Jews who arrived at the Lenin Library steps for the vigil Friday were headed off by police and plainclothesmen who escorted them to the nearest subway, the sources reported.

FIREBOMBS HIT MOVIE THEATERS SHOWING FILM ON ENTEBBE RESCUE

ROME, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Police are investigating the firebomb attacks last week at three movie theaters that were showing the film "Long Night at Entebbe." A leaflet found in a telephone booth today claimed the attacks were the work of "Palestinian militants for the Arab Revolution." The leaflet said the film, which recounts the rescue

of hijack victims at Uganda's Entebbe Airport last July, as "an absurd picture of Israelis as the liberators of old people and children." Police said they did not know if the leaflet is genuine.

CANADIAN JEWS IN HONORS LIST

TORONTO, Dec. 26 (JTA)--David Lewis, former leader of the New Democratic Party, was one of two persons named Companions of the Order of Canada in the New Year's honors list issued by the Canadian government. Two other distinguished Jewish citizens named Officers of the Order are Maxwell Cohen and Louis Applebaum.

Lewis, 67, was born in Poland and came to Canada at the age of 12. He won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford from McGill University. The son of a Bundist leader, he has been a socialist all of his life. Cohen, 66, born in Winnipeg, is a former Dean of Law at McGill University in Montreal. He has been active in Jewish and Zionist circles, particularly in public relations work on behalf of Israel. His professional field is international law.

Applebaum, 58, is a Toronto composer and conductor who has produced musical works for the National Film Board, the Stratford (Ontario) Shakespearian Festival and other cultural causes and agencies. A fourth Jewish recipient, named a Member of the Order, is Frances Adaskin of Vancouver, a pianist.

SPEAKERS AT FRIENDS MEETING

WASHINGTON, Dec. 26 (JTA)--The American Friends Service Committee has listed its speakers for its conference here Feb. 11-14 which is aimed at promoting United States recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

One of the speakers is Sabri Jiryis, the PLO representative who was ordered to leave the U.S. Nov. 30. The State Department said yesterday that Jiryis left the country and that any application to return would have to be examined in light of the fact that he listed false information on his original visa application.

Among speakers listed by the Committee in a brochure are Max Ticktin, vice-chairperson of Breira and assistant national director of B'nai B'rith Hillel, and Arthur Waskow, of the Institute for Policy Studies. Both were among five Jews who met with Jiryis and another PLO representative in Washington in November. Other speakers include Richard A. Falk, of Princeton University, and Prof. Matti Peled, of Tel Aviv University.

WILLIAM GOLDFINE DEAD AT 78

NEW YORK, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Funeral services will be held tomorrow for William Goldfine, long active in Jewish communal affairs, who died yesterday at the New York Hospital following a stroke last Tuesday. He was 78 years old. President and board chairman of the now defunct Royal National Bank of New York, Goldfine was chairman of the Israel Bond Organization in New York from 1963-66 and for many years was involved in the United Jewish Appeal.

He participated for more than 30 years in the affairs of the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Riverdale, N.Y., and served several terms as president. The home moved there in 1951 from Harlem and in 1967, under Goldfine's guidance, constructed a 140-bed hospital at a cost of \$3.5 million.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW**THE SITUATION OF SOVIET JEWRY**

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Despite attempts to repress it, a vibrant revival of Jewish culture is taking place in the Soviet Union, and involves thousands of people in many parts of the country.

Many young people who have not yet applied to settle in Israel belong to independent modern Hebrew song groups; cultural magazines circulate in "samizdat" editions; books on Jewish history, philosophy, belles-lettres and literature which are brought in from abroad pass from hand to hand. In Kishinev, there is a private Jewish theater group. This is apart from the annual Israel Independence Day assemblies in the forests outside Moscow and the regular "ulpanim" for the serious study of Hebrew.

Details of the Jewish renaissance appear in a massive review of 1976 written by seven Moscow Jewish leaders. The document, the fourth report of its kind since autumn 1973, found its way to London where a translation was obtained by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Discuss Jewish Culture, Israel

The seven authors include organizers of last week's Moscow culture symposium, such as Prof. Alexander Lerner and Anatoly Sharansky. They note that the seminars organized by the scientist-refuseniks have long since turned into groups for the discussion of questions of Jewish history and culture and the problems of Israel. "Occasionally lectures are given at them by Jews from the U.S., Western Europe and even from Israel."

In June, there was the 100th session of Lerner's scientific seminar, which is officially recognized by the Weizmann Institute. The seminar, begun by Prof. Alexander Voronel five years ago, is now conducted by Prof. Mark Ahzel following Voronel's emigration. Similarly, the philosophy and history seminar begun by Dr. Vitaly Rubín is continuing successfully after its founder's emigration to Israel.

Seminars of science and culture have also begun in Riga, led by Dr. Arkady Tsinober; in Vilna, by Dr. Naum Salansky; in Kishinev, by Piotr Roitberg, and several other towns. While focussing on Zion, these seminars "have even begun to debate the question of a re-birth of Jewish culture in the USSR," the authors write.

This year, an amateur theater in Kishinev performed sketches based on stories by Israeli humorist Ephraim Kishon. "The theater was so popular that the authorities decided not to interrupt the performance," the report says. Afterwards, though, they started to intimidate members of the company.

The Soviet authorities also disapprove of remembrance services for Jews killed by the Nazis. But under pressure, this year they allowed a service at Babi Yar, although wreaths referring to Jewish victims there were banned and several Jews in other cities were barred from attending.

New Hurdles In Emigration Procedures

On the question of emigration, the report says that although the Soviet authorities made some concessions prior to the Communist Party Congress in February, difficulties intensified as soon as it was over, and refusniks, whom some, according to the authorities, were due to be re-examined had their refusals confirmed.

This year, too, the movements of activists were restricted and their contacts with the West

became far more difficult. Tourists from the West wishing to meet would-be emigrants were harassed.

New difficulties also have appeared in the procedure for obtaining emigration documents. A person may have to wait a year or more before receiving the invitation from relatives in Israel, which the authorities demand. The longer an applicant has to wait, the more difficult his situation becomes, a fact which has an intimidating effect on many would-be emigrants.

Since September, the authorities in a group of towns in the Ukraine--notably Kiev and Odessa--refuse to accept applications from people of any age whose parents are not applying to emigrate with them. This happens even when the parents want their children to leave without them. This objection is based on a rigid interpretation of the Helsinki agreement under which the Soviet Union commits itself to the principle of "reunion of families."

The head of the All-Union Ovir, V. Obidin, is quoted as saying: "We are now putting a stop to all arbitrary emigration. In accordance with the decisions of the Helsinki agreement, we shall let people go only where it is for reunification of families. And a family, in accordance with the code on marriage and family of the USSR, consists only of husband, wife and their unmarried children."

The authors conclude that if a truly free emigration were allowed from the Soviet Union, very many more Jews would leave.

HADASSAH TO ADOPT SOVIET 'PEN PALS'

NEW YORK, Dec. 26 (JTA)--Hundreds of women in the New York metropolitan area are adopting Soviet "pen pals." Through Hadassah chapters, the names of Soviet Jews who have expressed a strong desire to correspond with co-religionists in the United States have been given to the American women, who will write in English, Russian, Yiddish or Hebrew.

The letter-writing effort is a joint project with the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, which provided the names and addresses from the Soviet Union. "Russian Jews are eager for contacts with the outside world," Sylvia Eisen, the Hadassah liaison of the project, said. "The letters will be a political. We have no intention of embarrassing the recipients."

Bernice S. Tannenbaum, president of Hadassah, said that the organization will follow this effort, known as "Project Yachad" (Together) with great interest. "If there is a genuine thaw and correspondence flows freely," she predicted that Hadassah women all over the United States will want to take pen in hand. "If the project is stymied," Mrs. Tannenbaum said, "we shall call on the Carter Administration to take another look at the Helsinki accords, so the issue can be dealt with at the follow-up meeting in Belgrade this summer."

GENEVA (JTA)--A committee of Yad Vashem has been created in Switzerland to support Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and propose new ideas and programs adapted to the conditions in this country. The aim is to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and the Jewish resistance. The committee was set up by representatives of the cultural and youth departments of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities and members of the rabbinical and teachers associations.