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CABINET UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN TO BE PRESENTED TO SADAT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 22 (JTA)--The Cabinet today gave its unanimous approval to Premier Menachem Begin's peace plan, including "administrative autonomy" for West Bank and Gaza Strip Arabs. Begin will present the plan to President Anwar Sadat of Egypt at their summit meeting at Ismailia Sunday.

The Cabinet met in special session for seven hours to hear the plan. It was briefed by Begin on his recent trip to the U.S. and by Defense Minister Ezer Weizman on his meetings this week with Sadat and Egyptian War Minister Gen. Mohammed Gamassy. The Cabinet decided that Begin would be accompanied to Ismailia by Weizman and Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan.

Talking to reporters after the session, Begin said Israel was satisfied with the rapid pace of developments because "this is the propitious moment for peace." He said his summit meeting with Sadat will be "one of the most important meetings so far" because negotiations will be for a peace treaty. He said Israel will come with maps in hand "but we shall also hear what the Egyptians have to say."

Begin said he had not heard of the statement by Sadat yesterday that Egypt would not accept a continued Israeli military presence on the West Bank. "Our position is known and we shall bring it before the President," he said. The Premier also hinted that the present Cairo conference might be upgraded. He said continuation of the Cairo talks in their present form has not been clarified yet. He said he would propose to Sadat that Israel and Egypt establish working committees on various subjects.

Begin said today's Cabinet discussions were conducted at a very high standard. "It was one of the better meetings we had," he said, stressing the unanimous support his proposals received. He said the meeting was a long one "because we dealt with questions which will determine the future of the nation."

Plan Includes Administrative Autonomy

An official announcement late today said: "The Cabinet approved the Israeli peace proposals which include giving administrative autonomy to the residents of Judaea and Samaria and the Gaza district. The plan will be brought by the Prime Minister before the President of Egypt at the meeting of the Egyptian and Israeli delegations in Ismailia."

Reminded of the demonstration by several hundred Gush Emunim followers outside his office while the Cabinet was in session today, protesting any concessions on the West Bank, Begin said, "I love them very much and I shall continue to love them but their demonstration is unjustified." (See related story.)

It remained unclear how long Begin and Sadat will meet. The Knesset is scheduled to hold a political debate Monday, which means that the Premier does not plan to be in Egypt more than a day. But a longer stay was not ruled out if the two leaders believe their discussions must be extended.

EGYPT'S TOUGH LINE ON SINAI SEEN AS INITIAL POINT IN BARGAINING PROCESS

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, Dec. 22 (JTA)--Egypt has taken a very tough line on negotiations over Sinai, it was learned here from reliable sources. Although Defense Minister Ezer Weizman gave no details of his two days of talks with Egyptian War Minister Gen. Mohammed Gamassy, leaked reports from the Defense Ministry indicated that the positions of the two sides are very far apart. But they are regarded here as starting points only in the hard bargaining that lies ahead.

According to the sources, Egypt now insists on total Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula and is demanding reciprocity in all aspects of a Sinai settlement. If Israel wants a demilitarized zone in Sinai, Egypt is insisting that there also be a demilitarized zone on the Israeli side of the border.

If Israel wants a reduction of forces in Egypt, the Egyptians say Israel must be prepared to reduce its own forces to the same extent. And if the Israelis want to man early warning stations in Sinai to ensure its security, the Egyptians will ask for similar early warning stations as close as possible to the Israeli border.

President Anwar Sadat has said publicly that Egypt would not agree to a continued Israeli military presence on the West Bank. While this can be regarded as a starting point, the fact that it was stated by Sadat himself indicates that the negotiations will be tough.

SPECIAL ANALYSIS
THE MELLOWING OF A HARD-LINER

By David Landau

CAIRO, Dec. 22 (JTA)--If Menachem Begin brings peace to Israel he will become a hero of Jewish history. He will share the Nobel Peace Prize with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. He will be hailed and feted as a statesman of giant stature--and deservedly so. He will receive the accolades of his countrymen, and the honest apologies of those who questioned the wisdom of his policies and actions. And deservedly so.

How will he have done it? How does one explain the evident paradox of the dyed-in-the-wool hard-liner coming to terms with the enemy when for 30 years the ostensible moderates who led Israel failed to do so? Of course the "deGaulle syndrome" is readily available as a suitable scientific explanation, complete with historical precedents to prove its pertinence/validity.

Indeed, it was this thesis--that only a hard-line opposition leader of unimpeachable moral authority can ultimately push through an unpopular, even humiliating, withdrawal--that comforted some of us in Israel and some of Israel's friends around the world when Begin was swept to power last May. And, indeed, current political events inside Israel show there is much truth in it.

The Begin-Sadat Equation

But the "deGaulle syndrome" alone is too facile, too pat to provide a genuinely comprehensive and incisive explanation of what has happened in Israeli policy-making. It is useful as a shorthand for describing the internal political situation. But it does

chester, England, whom he visited two years ago.

Pinto told me sadly of the waves of emigration since 1948, and the persecutions culminating in the internment of Jewish males after the Six-Day War. Now, he told me, the community boasts only two doctors, two lawyers and one comfortable businessman -- 75-year-old Felix Iscaki, president of the community.

Yet when speaking to men like Rossano and Pinto I understood why, although reduced to a handful, Cairo's Jewish community had miraculously survived and was able to greet its brothers from Israel after President Sadat's historic Jerusalem journey.

Thanks to the efforts of Iscaki and others, the Adly Street Synagogue functions as a living house of prayer for Sabbaths and festivals. Memorial lights are kindled for the dead and, I was assured, Cairo's many other synagogues still stand, even though their former members are scattered all over the world. The tiny community even maintains a home for elderly infirm people in Heliopolis.

'Nothing Is Impossible'

"Nothing is impossible," declared Rossano as Israeli and other Jewish journalists filled the synagogue last Friday night. With tears in his clear blue eyes, he recalled his visit to Israel long before 1948, when it was called "The Jewish National Home" and when Meir Dizengoff, Tel Aviv's first mayor, was still in office.

"What we need most of all is a rabbi," said Pinto as he showed me the week's portion in one of the synagogue's 15 Torah scrolls in their handsome caskets. That and peace which will surely bring new Jews--Israelis and others--back to Egypt. If the peace hopes collapse, even a rabbi may be unable to save this once great community from disappearing completely.

CONCERN OVER CONCESSIONS

By Yitzhak Shargil and Gil Sedan

TEL AVIV, Dec. 22 (JTA)--The imminent prospect that Israel will have to make serious concessions in order to maintain the current momentum toward peace has aroused concern among the strongest supporters of Premier Menachem Begin's Likud government. They are worried about the future status of the occupied territories and especially the fate of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in northern Sinai.

Although the details of Begin's peace plan have yet to be made public, the Premier's references to "self-rule" for the West Bank and Gaza Strip populations and indications that Israel is prepared to return most of Sinai to Egypt drew sharp criticism in Herut circles. Members of the Greater Israel Movement, the ultra-nationalist Gush Emunim and other hard-liners are demanding clarification by Begin of what he has in mind. The government's policy so far has been to try to calm the fears without disclosing anything more than is already known of Begin's peace proposals.

Gush Holds Demonstration

The Gush Emunim have emerged as the most vocal critics of Begin's proposals. But in the absence of hard facts about the plan, the movement's leaders have decided not to take any clear stand against the Premier for the time being. Nevertheless, several hundred Gush followers, joined by representatives of Jordan Valley settlers, held a silent demonstration "of concern" outside the Premier's Office in Jerusalem today.

They asked for a meeting with Begin to get first hand information about the proposals he will take to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat at their meeting this Sunday. Yehuda Etzion of Ofra, a Gush settlement in Samaria, said "We must prepare ourselves for the possibility that the peace talks will blow up. In that case, we shall face a difficult situation at home. The government will be faced with tremendous pressures to make more concessions," he said.

The Gush leadership met yesterday with leaders of the Greater Israel Movement and Ein Vered, composed mainly of Labor Party hard-liners. The three groups agreed to coordinate their actions should the Begin program prove unacceptable to them.

Israel Will Remain On West Bank

Meanwhile, Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Zipori had the task of reassuring Likud's Histadrut faction at a meeting here last night. He insisted that there was no erosion or deviation by the government from Likud's election platform. "We said clearly we shall be ready for far-reaching concessions in Sinai, we said we shall not leave the Golan Heights and that there will be no third state between the sea and the desert. We stand on these points," Zipori said.

He stressed that Israeli forces will remain in Judaea and Samaria regardless of what form of local autonomy emerged. "The control over the borders will be in our hands," he said. He acknowledged that the question of the West Bank is difficult because Israel's problem is "to find a way of having our cake and eating it." In any case, he declared, "there is no intention of giving up settlements in the administered territories."

But Zipori admitted something that government officials have rarely said in public. He told the Likud constituents that while there were big plans for settlements there were not enough settlers and those who were ready were not necessarily the type for such places. He criticized the Raffah salient settlers for behaving like feudal lords with thousands of Bedouins working for them. He denigrated the settlers of the coastal development town of Yamit as an intelligentsia which does nothing.

Zipori conceded that there was an element of danger in concessions for peace but warned that without taking risks nothing would move. "I can only assure you that we shall not risk those things that may really endanger our State," he said.

DAYAN TO MEET WITH THE POPE?

JERUSALEM, Dec. 22 (JTA)--A Foreign Ministry source would not rule out the possibility today that Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan will meet with the Pope early in January. The report that Dayan will visit the Vatican was first made yesterday by NBC.

The source said Dayan was scheduled to visit Italy next month in response to an invitation he received in the recent United Nations General Assembly convention. "It makes sense that once in Italy, Dayan will meet with the Pope," the source said. The source declined to confirm, though, the report that Dayan would discuss with the Pope plans for Jerusalem.

The visit to Italy will last two to three days, the source said. It is not the first time that an Israeli Foreign Minister will meet with the Pope. In the past, Israeli Foreign Ministers did so during their visits to Italy. . . .

NEW YORK (JTA)--The American Zionist Federation announced Thursday that the deadline for receiving ballots for the U.S. delegates to the World Zionist Congress has been extended from Jan. 3 to Jan. 9.

KNESSET URGES GOVERNMENT TO SIMPLIFY PROCEDURES FOR ABSORBING IMMIGRANTS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 22 (JTA)--The Knesset called on the government this week to simplify the absorption procedures and end the unnecessary division of activities among various absorption agencies. The Knesset also called for intensified action abroad in order to promote the return of former Israelis. Aliya emissaries should be selected more carefully, a Knesset resolution said, in order to increase their influence in Jewish communities.

Absorption Minister David Levi said in the debate Monday that he had reached an agreement with the Finance Ministry that his ministry would receive a special additional budget to improve the absorption procedures of former Israelis returning to Israel. The new project will be implemented Jan. 1, Levi said. He also said it was decided that his ministry would be solely responsible for the absorption of returning Israelis, and not the Jewish Agency.

Levi announced that the Housing and Construction Ministry agreed to begin immediately to purchase second-hand apartments for the use of elderly immigrants.

Year Of Peace, Immigration

Likud faction chairman, Avraham Sharir, suggested that Israel's 30th anniversary be designated as the year of peace and immigration. He warned that without massive immigration the Jewish population in Israel faced the danger of becoming a minority even in this generation. The natural growth of the Arab population in Israel is three times larger than of the Jewish population, he said.

Sharir noted there was hardly any immigration from the U.S., but rather "a penetration by singles." He also suggested that Israel should make as a condition of any resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union the total opening of the gates for Jewish emigrants from the USSR.

Alignment MK Gad Yaacobi said there was no justification in trying to "buy off" returning Israelis with material bait. The 300,000 Israelis now living abroad will not come back because of material benefits, but rather as a result of "a basic Zionist conviction," he declared.

All the speakers shared criticism against the bureaucracy involved in absorbing immigrants.

Promotion Of Aliya From U.S.

The subject of aliya was also dealt with at a press conference convened Tuesday by Mordechai Bar On, chairman of the World Zionist Organization Youth and Hechalutz Department. He said that in 28 Jewish communities in the United States, in which more than 2.5 million Jews live, there are now "aliya desks" for the promotion of aliya and lengthy visits to Israel. Additional desks will be established in another 25 communities in the near future, Bar On said.

He returned this week from an 11-month stay in the U.S. at the request of Jewish Agency Executive chairman Yosef Almogi. The purpose of the Bar On mission was to encourage greater involvement of local communities in the promotion of aliya. Bar On said the present Mideast peace developments have already increased the number of those interested in aliya.

ISRAEL'S ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS HAILED

NEW YORK, Dec. 22 (JTA)--A leading U.S. industrialist hailed Israel's economic achievements as a foundation for peace in the entire Middle East. A.R. Marusi, board chairman and chief executive officer of Borden, Inc., made this statement at a dinner of 1500 leaders in the chemical and food industries in honor of Milton Perlmutter, national chairman of the Commerce and Industry Division of Israel Bonds. Perlmutter is president of Supermarkets General Corp.

Marusi, who visited Israel early in the year, said that "year after year the building of a strong modern industrial state represented the most helpful resource of the Middle East." Citing Israel's industrial potential, he pointed out that Borden had imported much of its potash requirements from Israel during the past 10 years.

"I believe," he said, "that in the technical and scientific skills, the determination and compassion of modern Israel there is true hope for the Middle East." He emphasized that "Israel, the land of so much of our common history, is also the land of our common hope for peace today. It could not be so without the support of a vigorous and healthy industrial economy."

Israeli Premier Menachem Begin, in a message to the dinner, praised Perlmutter for his leadership in the Israel Bond program and commended him for encouraging industry leaders to trade with Israel. Herb Brody, vice-chairman of the board of Supermarkets General Corp., and Andrall E. Pearson, president of Pepsico, Inc., dinner chairmen, announced that $5.3 million in Israel Bonds had been sold as a result of the dinner. Michael Arnon, president of the Israel Bond Organization, presented the Israel Prime Minister's Medal to Perlmutter.

TEKOAH PREDICTS ISRAELI-ARAB COOPERATION IN DESERT DEVELOPMENT

NEW YORK, Dec. 22 (JTA)--Israel's former UN Ambassador Yosef Tekoah has predicted that recent Mideast peace initiatives can lead to major cooperation in the field of desert development and research between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Tekoah, president of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, made this observation during a visit to New York at which time he invited Americans to participate in a university sponsored "desert venture" from March 11-21, 1978.

"Bringing life and development to arid zones such as the Negev, is a research priority at Ben Gurion University," Tekoah stated, "and is of vital importance to Israel as well as such Arab states as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia." Accordingly, the "desert venture" will attempt to demonstrate what Israel has to offer to the cause of peace in the region.

The 10-day program, Tekoah said, "would be in the form of a seminar that would allow the participants to live and learn the fulfillment of David Ben Gurion's dream to conquer the desert. The past will be recaptured through visits to archaeological sites; the present reviewed through desert agriculture and industry; and the future by exposure to new, imaginative and experimental development projects."

Participants in the program, Tekoah added, "would also study the university's social integration program aimed at eliminating the social gap which currently plagues Israeli society." Ben Gurion University, which is largely made up of Sephardi and Oriental students, has since its inception placed great emphasis on helping underprivileged youths develop their academic skills and complete a college and a university career, Tekoah said.