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LINOWITZ: THERE IS A 'REASONABLE POSSIBILITY' OF REACHING AUTONOMY SETTLEMENT BY THE MAY 1 DEADLINE

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Sol Linowitz, President Carter's special Ambassador to the Middle East, said today following his return from initial talks in Jerusalem and Cairo, that Egypt and Israel have reached "significant measures of agreement" which have not "previously surfaced" and that "a reasonable possibility" exists that they may reach an autonomy settlement by May 1, 1980. Previously, there had been pessimism that the May deadline, set in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, was achievable.

Linowitz acknowledged that "the hard issues" such as land, water and security problems "require much more negotiations." But, he pointed out, agreement has been reached on such measures as taxation, transportation, health, "most aspects" of education, industrialization and some aspects of agriculture. The May date, he said, was looked on as "unachievable and not to be taken seriously." But, he found "real attention is focussed on May Day to make it a realistic goal."

He pointed to the "renewed commitment" by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Premier Menachem Begin of Israel to the Camp David accords and their mutual respect for each other, plus, "real awareness" by them of each other's problems, needs and aspirations.

Iranian Crisis Has Not Interfered

Appearing at a State Department press conference five days after his return last Thursday night, from a six-day visit to the Middle East, Linowitz said that the Iranian crisis has "not interfered in any way" with the negotiations and their "pace" is "precisely as scheduled."

However, he said, "it would not be realistic" to think that it (the Iranian crisis) will not intrude since "Iran hovers over everything in the area" and "what the ultimate fallout in the Moslem area generally" will be as to "what took place in Iran and indeed, in Mecca." Linowitz said that "for the moment" those developments have not had an impact on the negotiations. "But everyone is conscious of what is going on," he said.

Issue Of The Palestinians

Asked if Egypt and Israel do agree by May, would other Arabs join the talks, Linowitz replied, "If I were a Palestinian on the West Bank and Gaza, I don't think I would be interested" in the autonomy proposals thus far, since "I would ask, 'What's in it for me,' and what does autonomy mean?" However, if we do flesh out this concept, if we show the Palestinians this is what you will be able to carry out," Linowitz said, then he would hope other Arabs would join. "The challenge is to us," he said, to present a "credible, viable system" that would make it palatable to the Palestinians. Asked if the U.S. is preparing a set of viable proposals, Linowitz replied, "No, we are putting forth ideas." He was also asked whether, in view of the

fact that Jerusalem is a unified city and the capital of Israel, it is the "challenge" for Israel to give up East Jerusalem or permit the inhabitants of East Jerusalem to vote in the West Bank elections. The envoy replied to the reporter, "I am not going to let you define the issues."

Linowitz also declined to define the U.S. position on the "legitimate rights" of Palestinians and "self-determination" for them. But he firmly supported the Camp David frameworks and the U.S. search for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. "I would not change the Camp David accords," he said. Asked if the Camp David accords are "an obstacle" to U.S. policy, he replied, "No, I haven't found that at all."

He said, however, that the U.S. would take "a hard look" at its Middle East interests. "A real effort" should be made to have Jordan's King Hussein enter the talks, he said, and hoped to meet with him to discuss the issue at length. No date was mentioned.

REPORT IRANIAN VOLUNTEERS HAVE ARRIVED IN SOUTH LEBANON FROM SYRIA

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- A Christian radio station on the Lebanese border claimed today that Iranian volunteers have crossed into south Lebanon from Syria and are stationed in Nabatiya, a village under the control of Palestinian terrorists. There was no official confirmation here but Israeli sources said that it was possible that a few of the Iranians who landed in Syria this week may have infiltrated into south Lebanon, but not in any substantial numbers.

The report was broadcast by "The Voice of Hope," a small radio station north of Metuliah which is operated by American volunteers who support Maj. Saad Haddad's Christian militia in south Lebanon. Immediately after the broadcast, Haddad's forces began shelling Nabatiya. Haddad reportedly met today with officers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to warn them that he would shell any village that harbored volunteers from Iran.

Haddad also urged President Elias Sarkis of Lebanon to unify all "true" Lebanese forces for the sake of the country. The Christian militia commander, who is supported by Israel, is not recognized by the government in Beirut and has been branded a "renegade." Meanwhile, Radio Monte Carlo reported that Syrian authorities said yesterday that they would not allow the Iranians to enter Lebanon unless the Lebanese government agreed.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA GROUP OF RA MEMBERS MOVE TO FORCE VOTE ON ORDINATION OF WOMEN

By Rochelle Saidel Wolk

NEW YORK, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Action taken here yesterday by a group of some 175 Rabbinical Assembly (RA) members calling themselves the Conference on Halachic Process may force a vote tomorrow on the ordination of women by the Conservative movement.

Conference chairmen were Rabbi David Algaize, Rabbi David Feldman, Rabbi Albert Lewis and Rabbi Hershel Portnoy, with some 145 co-sponsors listed. The meeting was held in Terrace on the Park, in Flushing Meadow, because it was considered "neutral territory" by the planners.

A meeting of the "Secate," a group of 50 mem-

bers of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America faculty who must decide on the issue, will take place at the Seminary tomorrow. Although such a meeting had been previously scheduled, the vote was not originally expected until January.

Sixteen members of the Senate, most of whom were co-sponsors of yesterday's meeting,

had stated on Nov. 6 that they would not vote on the question of the ordination of women "unless a proper body is constituted to deal with the issue."

According to reliable sources, the RA have now decided to vote for a motion to table the vote and put the issue of the status of women into the hands of a committee of halachists, to be appointed by the Seminary's Chancellor, Dr. Gerson Cohen.

"I would regard the passage of such a motion as de facto defeat of ordination," Cohen told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "However, I believe that the Conservative movement must maintain its pluralism, and the proponents of this motion to table assure me that the passage of their motion would assure pluralism." Cohen said he is deeply religiously convinced that the ordination of women is "halachically correct and spiritually necessary."

Group Adopts A Resolution

After hearing position papers by the five senior members of the Jewish Theological Seminary Talmud Department, the group at yesterday's meeting passed a resolution that stated:

"Whereas the decision on the ordination of women by the Seminary must be made in consonance with halachic process and whereas the major halachists of the Talmud faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary have presented their halachic positions on the question of the ordination of women and whereas the weight of these presentations is overwhelmingly in opposition to the ordination of women at this time, be it resolved that we, more than 200 members of the RA assembled at the Conference on Halachic Process express our opposition to the ordination of women by the Jewish Theological Seminary at this time. We call upon the Seminary to assure our continuation as a movement committed to halacha and halachic process."

Papers Presented At Meeting

The five professors who presented their views on halachic process and the ordination of women were: Israel Francus, Dov Zlotnick, Jose Faur, Haim Zalman Dimitrovsky and David Weiss Halivni. All opposed the ordination of women by the Conservative movement but approached the issue from different aspects of halacha.

Francus' paper was based on the premise that women who voluntarily impose upon themselves the mitzvot (commandments) from which they are exempt cannot be considered halachically equal with men, who are required to perform these mitzvot. Anyone who votes to allow the Conservative movement to ordain women will be "assisting transgressors," he said.

Zlotnick stated that he was using the Mishnah as his medium and "the medium is the message." He declared that "without halacha, no movement can claim it represents the mainstream of Judaism. No commission, no action of the Senate can change two millennia and make women acceptable to Klal Yisrael."

Faur pointed out that there are two aspects to the issue of ordination. More important than the question of ordination of women is the issue of

"halachic process," he said. "In Judaism the law transcends human bureaucracy and protects us."

Dimitrovsky discussed the problem of women as witnesses, in areas not halachically permitted. He said that he believed that the function of a rabbi cannot be separated from the function of serving as a witness for marriages and divorces.

Weiss said that those who do not consider it necessary for a rabbi to be a shaliach tzibur, one who officiates, are in error. Even a "cursory study" reveals that officiating at a wedding is the highest form of shaliach tzibur, he stated.

If a woman takes upon herself the obligations of a man, she can change her mind afterwards, he explained. He suggested that after a generation in which all women observe time-bound mitzvot, then the issue of women's ordination could be approached halachically. He also urged the Conservative movement not to rush into a decision about so major a change.

Another Resolution Adopted

In addition to the resolution on the ordination of women, the delegates at yesterday's meeting passed a resolution on the Conservative law committee, which reads in part: "Because of our desire that halacha and halachic process be strengthened within the Conservative movement, we hereby resolve that a committee be formed to study, evaluate and recommend plans and proposals for the restructuring of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards."

A proposal to form a "fellowship" of RA members dedicated to halacha was vehemently debated by some rabbis present who felt that such a step would cause divisiveness. Proposals on publication of the papers presented and on a committee to upgrade Jewish education met no opposition.

DEFEAT MOVES TO HOLD FURTHER HEARINGS ON THE ABORTION BILL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- The coalition majority in the Knesset's Social Welfare Committee defeated opposition attempts to hold further hearings on the controversial abortion law amendment that passed its first reading in the Knesset Monday. The measure is expected to come before the Knesset for its second and third readings early next week and is considered certain to be adopted.

Menachem Porush of the Aguda Israel, who is chairman of the committee, ruled against calling expert witnesses -- doctors and social workers -- despite angry protests by the Labor opposition. He insisted on and got a committee vote in favor of the restrictive measure which the Aguda has demanded as its price for remaining within Premier Menachem Begin's coalition.

The amendment passed its first reading Monday by a vote of 58-53 with nine abstentions after Begin defused strong opposition within Likud's Liberal Party wing by declaring the issue a vote of confidence in his government. The amendment abolishes clause five of the Abortion Law which permitted abortions for socio-economic reasons, meaning for mothers of large poverty level families.

BEGIN; PROJECT RENEWAL TO CONTINUE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Project Renewal will continue as planned, Premier Menachem Begin assured Jewish Agency Executive chairman Leon Dulzin this week. Begin's assurance was contained in a telegram to Dulzin in reaction to reports that the project to rehabilitate poverty neighborhoods throughout the country might suffer from proposed

cuts in public spending. Project Renewal is a joint enterprise of the government and the Jewish Agency and world Jewry.

Dulzin had asked for clarification about the future of Project Renewal in view of measures being taken by Finance Minister Yigal Hurwitz to tighten the economy. Begin said he has taken appropriate action to ensure the continued work on the project. "The project was not suspended and we shall stand on our guard to make sure that it will not be suspended," the Premier said in his message to Dulzin. He asked the Jewish Agency chairman to inform world Jewish leaders of his promise. Deputy Premier Yigdal Yadin, who is in charge of the project, is due to meet with Hurwitz to discuss Project Renewal.

BLUM SAYS ISRAEL'S POSITION IN THE UN WAS FURTHER ERODED DURING GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S CURRENT SESSION By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Yehuda Blum, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, said today that Israel's position at the world organization was further eroded during the three-month session of the 34th General Assembly, which was scheduled to be concluded here this evening.

Speaking at a press conference at the Israel UN Mission, Blum claimed that "the erosion" was reflected not only in the anti-Israeli votes but also in the various speeches and debates held during the Assembly's session. "The erosion (in Israel's standing at the UN) was especially noticeable with Latin American countries," Blum said.

He noted that Latin American countries that traditionally voted with Israel, or at least abstained on anti-Israeli resolutions, supported anti-Israeli measures. This pattern was clearly reflected when only three Latin American countries voted against the inclusion of Zionism -- which is identified by the UN as "racism." -- In last Friday's resolution on "hegemonism," the Israeli envoy said.

Blum also said that "it is hard to ignore the worsening of our position among the Western (European) countries" in the UN. Blum pointed out that at the beginning of the general debate in the Assembly, Belgium, for instance, spoke "proudly" about the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Brussels and France was "unfriendly" toward Israel throughout the session.

Blum recalled that France was the only member of the nine-member European Economic Community (EEC) to abstain on the General Assembly resolution declaring the Camp David accords invalid. The other eight EEC countries voted against the resolution which was adopted by a vote of 79-33 with 33 abstentions.

A General Feeling Of Despair

The Israeli envoy claimed that there is a general feeling of "despair" among the West-European countries regarding the turn of events in the UN and that the attitude of the Western countries is influenced by the belief that they cannot succeed against the 77-member nonaligned bloc.

Observing that the 34th Assembly was dominated by the Cambodian and Iranian crises, Blum said the Arabs and the PLO "were forced to lower their profile" especially after the eruption of the Iranian crisis in early November. Palestine Week, and Palestine Day on Nov. 29, were therefore ignored by the media and were not given the attention they would have otherwise been given, Blum said.

"The Arabs and the PLO succeeded, however, in passing a series of resolutions enhancing the standing of the PLO in the UN. Blum said, underscoring the fact that the Assembly changed the Palestine Unit in the Secretariat to the Palestine Division and allocated a budget of \$2 million to the division, an increase of about \$1.5 million. In addition, the Secretariat was ordered to plan a series of commemorative stamps depicting the "plight of the Palestinian people."

The "hypocrisy" of the UN, Blum charged, was evidenced by the fact that the Assembly approved resolutions condemning directly and indirectly the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. "Instead of uniting for peace, the UN is uniting against peace," he said.

GUSH WANTS NEW SETTLEMENT NEAR YAMIT

By Gil Sedon

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- With the deadline for the evacuation of Elon Moreh less than a week away, the Gush Emunim became increasingly defiant of the government today. The settlers reiterated that they will not move unless the government alters present laws to make Jewish settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza legal and beyond challenge by the courts.

The Gush Secretariate announced last night that it had "decided" to establish a new settlement in the region of Yamit in northern Sinai which is slated to be returned to Egypt in 1981 in accordance with the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

The government is expected to veto that idea. Nor is it likely to initiate legislation of the kind demanded by the Gush as there is no possibility that it could win a majority in the Knesset or the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, settlers of Yamit, still unreconciled to the fact that they will have to leave within the next two years, embarked on a motor caravan from Sinai through Tel Aviv to the Western Wall in Jerusalem today. They covered their cars with signs reading "Yamit is the Wall of Jerusalem" and "The Yamit Region Settlements are the Shield of Ashkelon."

The motorcade was organized by MK Geyla Cohen and Hannan Porat, leaders of the ultra-nationalist Tehiya movement. The Defense Ministry barred the demonstrators from passing through Arab villages in the Gaza Strip as they had planned because of the provocative nature of such a move.

DENIES MENGELE IS IN CHILE

SANTIAGO, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Reports that Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele is hiding out in Chile were denied by Foreign Minister Hernan Cubillos. He told reporters that the government has no information that he is in the country.

The question was raised after Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal said in Vienna last Friday that he had reliable information from three independent sources that Mengele, the Auschwitz death camp doctor, had left Paraguay and joined a colony of ex-Nazis in Dignidad, in southern Chile. Meanwhile, Hernan Schmidt, head of the Dignidad colony, also denied that Mengele had ever been there and claimed the members did not share Mengele's anti-Semitic views.

Warrants for his arrest have been issued by West German embassies throughout Latin America, leading apparently to the revocation of his Paraguayan citizenship last August.

REMINDER: There will be no Bulletin dated Dec. 25, due to Christmas, a postal holiday.