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SOVIET FORCES IN SYRIA TOP TOTAL FOR REST OF THE MIDEAS

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Defense Secretary Harold Brown's annual report to Congress justifying the Defense Department's new budget has disclosed that Soviet and East European military technicians in Syria have exceeded all those in the Middle East and South Asia except for Afghanistan.

Brown's statistics said that Soviet and East European military personnel in 1978 in Syria totaled 2,580 while the total in the remainder of the Mid-East and South Asia was 2,050. This was made up of 1,200 in Iraq, 150 in North Yemen, 550 in South Yemen and 150 in India. In Afghanistan as of Jan. 4 there were 50,000 Communist technicians, he said. Cuban forces numbered 150 in North Yemen and 1,000 in South Yemen.

"That instability in the Middle East will be the rule rather than the exception seems highly probable for some years to come," Brown reported. He noted that "the moderate Arab states, except for Oman and the Sudan, have opposed" the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and "Iraq and Iran may yet come into formal conflict."

"The situation in southern Lebanon, where Israeli-supported Christian militia forces continue to confront Palestinian guerrillas and Moslem leftists, could erupt into larger-scale violence and draw in both Syria and Israel," Brown said.

ISRAELIS SHOCKED OVER VIRULENT ATTACK BY EGYPTIAN DEPUTY PREMIER

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Israeli circles have reacted with "disgust" and disbelief to virulently anti-Israel remarks attributed to Egyptian Deputy Premier, Hassan Tohamy in an interview published in the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Siyassa. Egyptian diplomats presently in Tel Aviv seeking premises for their Embassy, were embarrassed and suggested that the comments, reported by Haaretz yesterday may have been taken out of context.

Israeli political circles said Tohamy's remarks were "foolish and incredible" and in no way reflect the views of the Egyptian President and government as Israel knows them. Tohamy, a long-time friend of President Anwar Sadat and an early participant in the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, was quoted as predicting the imminent collapse of that "semi-state, Israel."

According to the interview, he said he deduced from conversations with Jews and from Koranic references that the end of Israel is near. He accused Israelis of besmirching his name and claimed that Jews were "traitors and hypocrites and had been portrayed as such in history books."

Tohamy is a Moslem fundamentalist who has been close to Sadat since the pre-revolutionary times in Egypt. He met with then Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan in Morocco before Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November, 1977 and was the No. 2 man in the Egyptian delegation to the Camp David conference in September, 1978.

He worked on the peace frameworks at Camp David and later publicly advocated piping Nile waters to Israel to help make the Negev bloom.

However, he has been an Islamic zealot with respect to the future of Jerusalem and once spoke of organizing a march of 1 million Moslems to wrest the city from Israeli control. Although he is rarely seen in public of late, observers here believe it would be premature to discount him as an influential factor in Cairo.

Hassan Abdul Samad Kamel, the Egyptian diplomat who heads the delegation now seeking quarters in Tel Aviv, said he had not seen the Al-Siyassa interview but knew that Tohamy was giving a series of interviews to Kuwaiti newspapers to correct quotes attributed to him by three Israeli journalists in a book on the peace process, "Year of the Dove."

JEWISH GROUPS REFUSE TO TESTIFY AT NCC HEARINGS ON THE MIDEAST

By David Friedman

NEW YORK, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Jewish organizations have refused invitations to testify at "hearings" on the Middle East being conducted by the National Council of Churches (NCC) because they believe the Protestant organization has demonstrated a pro-Arab bias which will pre-determine the outcome of the hearings.

One of the Jewish organizations, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said today it will not testify before the NCC because of "the clear and consistent pro-Arab and pro-PLO stance which has marked the NCC attitude for many years." Another group, the American Jewish Committee, said it decided not to participate in the hearings "in the interest of Jewish unity" after it learned that all other Jewish organizations had refused to take part.

The NCC had invited 17 Jewish organizations to take part in the hearings scheduled in New York today and in Washington next Wednesday as a prelude to a three-week fact-finding tour of the Middle East by the NCC's recently reconstituted Middle East Panel.

Cites Pro-Arab, Pro-PLO Leanings

The ADL statement was made in Palm Beach, Fla., where the agency's national executive committee is scheduled to meet this weekend. Nathan Perlmutter, ADL's national director, said the decision was made after "painstaking deliberations" which concluded that the hearings have a "pre-determined outcome."

He said the ADL decision was made "reluctantly and with deep regret" particularly since the ADL has had a long relationship with the NCC. "We have shared barricades on many battlefields for human rights and interreligious and interracial friendship and understanding," Perlmutter said.

In a report prepared for delivery to the ADL's executive committee meeting, Nat Kameny, chairman of the national program committee, reviewed the NCC's "disturbing and troubling record of pro-Arab, pro-PLO leanings." Among the examples cited are: various programs and seminars "consistently unfriendly to Israel"; "experts" used by the

NCC for guidelines who, for the most part, the ADL said, are former missionaries in Arab lands with a conditioned bias anti-Israel resolutions and a recent NCC press kit which the ADL said seeks "to undermine and reverse Christian support of Israel."

Kameny noted that while NCC "has always claimed" an even-handed approach in the Middle East "when votes are taken in the NCC governing board on resolutions affecting Israel the views of pro-Arab, pro-PLO spokesmen nearly always prevail." He said that instead of testifying the ADL will spell out its differences over NCC's attitude and stance in a memorandum to be distributed to church leaders throughout the United States. "It is our hope to provide the factual background on Israel and the Middle East needed for informed and sensitive Christian dialogue on a grassroots level," Kameny said.

Basin for A.J. Committee's Refusal

The A.J. Committee, however, while not testifying at the hearings has sent the NCC a copy of the statements it would have made to the panel. "The A.J. Committee decision was announced by Rabbi A. James Rudin, its assistant national interreligious affairs director, and Inge Lederer Gibel, program specialist in the Interreligious Affairs Department.

"Since its founding in 1906, the A.J. Committee has been deeply committed to the democratic process as a means of sharing concerns and as a means of seeking to influence our fellow Americans," the statement by Rudin and Gibel said.

"Unfortunately, others in the American Jewish community feel strongly in the opposite direction in relation to the NCC Panel. Because of the paramount importance we give to the principle of the unity of the Jewish people, we are not prepared to undermine that unity, especially at a time when hostile elements both here and in the Middle East are attempting to weaken the State of Israel. Thus, we feel obligated to maintain that solidarity at this critical time."

In transmitting this statement to the NCC, Rudin and Gibel noted that the A.J. Committee testimony planned for the hearings makes "plain our strong disagreement with both the substance and the format of the panel's work up to now." They said that "the issues as presently formulated by the NCC Panel and the assumptions they represent hardly reflect the actual sentiment and convictions of the majority of American Christians and Jews."

The A.J. Committee also expressed concern "with the format of the hearings that allots an equal amount of time to legitimate and representative Jewish groups which have a large and broad based constituency as well as to those groups and Jewish individuals who represent only themselves, who have been publicly repudiated by the American Jewish community for over 30 years. For the NCC Panel to devote substantial time and attention to such discredited individuals is akin to having Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis appear before a Panel as authentic representatives of American Protestantism."

The NCC Panel was created last November when the NCC general board refused to adopt a proposed resolution which would have charged Israel with violation of human rights and called

for suspension of all U.S. aid to the Jewish State. The decision by the NCC to send a fact-finding group was at the time hailed as a "constructive, responsible and statesmanlike approach for dealing with the Middle East issues," by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of interreligious affairs for the A.J. Committee.

In issuing their statement today, Rudin and Gibel stressed that they acted after consulting with A.J. Committee executive vice president Bertram Gold, who is currently participating in the A.J. Committee's Board of Governors meeting in Egypt and Israel, and with Tanenbaum, who is in Thailand as a member of the International Rescue Committee's efforts to supply food to starving Cambodian refugees.

BUSY JNF SCHEDULE

JERUSALEM, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Some 15,000 youths were busy clearing away underbrush and fallen branches in Jewish National Fund forests last Saturday which was Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year of the Trees. But planting was not allowed because this is a sabbatical year. According to tradition, the earth must lay fallow for one year every seven years.

The clean-up project was organized by the JNF and the Nature Reserve Society on the occasion of Nature Reserve Week which began Saturday. The youths came from high schools all over Israel, from Kiryat Shemona on the Lebanese border to Dimona and Arad in the Negev. Their work was important because the accumulation of forest debris during the dry season is often the cause of forest fires in the summer months. After several hours of work, the youngsters were taken on tours by Nature Reserve Society guides.

The JNF currently takes care of about 175,000 acres of planted forests throughout the country and another 75,000 acres of natural forests. It plans to plant an additional 125,000 acres of forest — about 6000 acres annually — over the next few years which will require 25 million saplings grown in JNF nurseries.

In addition to afforestation, the JNF has created five parks, extending over 5000 acres and scores of picnic areas in various parts of the country. Present plans call for another four parks and two nature reserves for animals. The JNF is focussing on land reclamation work in the Negev, the Judean desert, the Dead Sea valley, Arava and Eilat. It plans 14 tourist centers, up to 20 camping sites, 100 lookout posts and 60 antiquity sites in those areas.

JEWS FROM EGYPT TO VISIT ISRAEL - By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, Feb. 6 (JTA) — A group of 45 Egyptian Jews, most of them elderly, are due in Israel tomorrow as guests of a group of travel agencies, hotels and transportation companies which joined together to make the tour possible. The purpose is to enable them to meet Israeli relatives and to see the country from which they have been cut off for more than 30 years. They will also meet with Premier Menachem Begin and other Israeli leaders. Most of the visitors are from Alexandria.

A group of 106 American Jews arrived in Israel from Egypt via Sinai. They are members of an American Jewish Committee delegation that had been visiting Egypt, headed by A.J. Committee

president Richard Moass. At their invitation, they were accompanied by an American diplomat, James Leonard, who is deputy to Ambassador Sol Linowitz, President Carter's special ambassador to the Middle East.

Leonard, who had accompanied Linowitz to Saudi Arabia over the weekend, was due to fly to Israel via Athens. But he accepted the AJC committee's invitation to join them on the overland trip because he had never seen the Suez Canal or the Sinai desert. He told Israeli reporters that he found the bus trip too long. But the Egyptian customs officials made only a perfunctory search of the group's luggage as a gesture of good will.

Meanwhile, an Egyptian diplomatic team involved in the normalization process arrived in Tel Aviv to meet with Israeli officials. The two teams will establish eight bilateral committees to negotiate on civil aviation, land and sea transportation, energy, communications, trade, agricultural cooperation, tourism and culture and religious matters.

A team of Israeli aviation experts, headed by Ehud Shiloh, Director General of the Transport Ministry, flew to Cairo today to start negotiations for a civil aviation agreement. That accord has been given priority at the Israelis would like to see civilian flights between Tel Aviv and Cairo begin as soon as possible. Israel may also propose the establishment of a Tel Aviv-Cairo-New York route to be flown by carriers of both countries.

MOMENTUM INCREASES FOR A JEWISH PRESENCE IN HEBRON

By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Long-standing demands by nationalist and religious militants to establish a Jewish presence in Hebron received powerful impetus from the murder of Yehoshua Sloma, a 23-year-old yeshiva student in that West Bank Arab town last Thursday. The Cabinet is expected to take up the issue at its regular meeting next Sunday. Knesset sentiment seemed to be overwhelmingly in favor of such a move today and the coalition majority easily defeated motions by three opposition factions that would have barred Jews from settling in Hebron.

Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, who has frequently angered his Herut colleagues by his circumspect approach to the settlements issue, took a hard line on Hebron in the Knesset. "No power on earth can uproot our security presence and our dwelling in Judea and Samaria," he declared. "We have returned to the city of the Patriarchs (Hebron). Our right to live there is anchored in our religion and history." He promised that the government would beef up security on the West Bank to protect Jewish settlers and ensure their safe movement throughout the territory.

The militants, especially the residents of Kiryat Arba, the Gush Emunim stronghold adjacent to Hebron, are demanding that the government take over homes and public buildings in Hebron that had belonged to Jews who were massacred or forced to flee during the Arab uprising in 1929 and turn them over to Jewish settlers. Yossi Sarid, of the Labor Alignment, warned in the Knesset today that "Such a decision

will cause even more tension. It will affect negatively the process of the peace negotiations and will harm the prospects of autonomy. It will be one of the main obstacles on the way to peace."

Former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, an independent MK, supported Sarid's view up to a point. He warned that Jewish settlement of Hebron would be a serious mistake. But he advocated strengthening Kiryat Arba and the Etzion bloc of settlements. Dayan joined the opposition in the vote on motions by Shai, the Independent Liberals and the Civil Rights Movement that would have banned returning Jews to Hebron.

Ligud and National Religious Party MKs ridiculed the opposition arguments, stressing the right of Jews to live in Hebron and claiming that only a massive Jewish presence would convince the Arabs that "Israel is here to stay." Meanwhile, the curfew imposed on Hebron after Sloma's murder remained in force. Israeli authorities rejected Arab charges that it was a form of collective punishment and insisted that it was necessary to facilitate the investigation of the killing.

Mayor Fahed Kawasme of Hebron confirmed today that acts of vandalism were carried out at the mosque in the Cave of Machpela (Patriarchs Tomb). A Koran was urinated upon, sand was spilled on a carpet and the wire was cut to the microphone used by the muezzin to call Muslims to prayer. Kawasme said these acts were perpetrated shortly after the curfew was imposed. He also said he had no objections to Jews returning to Hebron, provided that Arabs were allowed to return to their old homes in Haifa and Jaffa.

FIRST RABBINICAL-CANTORIAL TEAM

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, Jan. 6 (JTA) — A spokesman for the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the association of Reform rabbis, said today that the appointment of Rabbi Stuart Gertman and his wife, Cantor Jean Sager, by the Fairmount Temple in Cleveland was the first husband-and-wife rabbinical and cantorial team to work in one synagogue.

The appointment is effective July 1, when Gertman, who has been director of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues since 1976, will assume primary responsibility as associate rabbi, for the education program of the Temple, of which the senior rabbi is Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld. Cantor Sager, who is presently cantor and music director of Temple Beth Am in Merrick, N.Y., will become cantor and music director of Fairmount Temple.

Gertman was ordained in New York at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (JUC-JIR) and became associate rabbi and director of education at Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, N.Y. before taking his present post. Sager received a Master's degree in Music Literature from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1975, and studied at the Juilliard School of Music and the Sorbonne. She was invested as cantor at the HUC-JIR School of Sacred Music in 1978. She has made appearances with the Bronx Opera Company and the New York Lyric Opera.

SCRANTON, Pa. (JTA) — The Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Council has published the first comprehensive Directory of Jewish Communal Services here.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA

JEWISH INVOLVEMENT WITH THE
BOAT PEOPLE, VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

By Ben Fradkin

(Part Two Of A Three-Part Series)

HONG KONG, Feb. 6 (JTA) — "To be along the Thailand-Cambodian border in January, 1980, is to see death, hunger and hope all rolled into one," said Rabbi Steven Jacobs of Temple Judea in Tarzana, California. "It is the Holocaust."

It is there, moreover, that this writer learned that the final act may soon be played out. Within the next few months, we may yet see another vast human tide of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees that will pale last summer's onslaught which in itself was a natural disaster.

In an interview in Hong Kong, just after Jacobs and Elmer Winter, past president of the American Jewish Committee, visited Thailand and Cambodia, Jacobs told me the crowded Shum Shui Po camp in Hong Kong was nothing compared to the thousands caught in open-air huts in camps sprayed by the cross fire of politics of famine, politics of hate and politics of war.

He agreed that the Cambodian people have become the pawns of geopolitics. The Vietnamese-backed Phnom Penh regime which has overrun Cambodia is fighting the deposed Pol Pot regime and in so doing may push out 300,000 men, women and children in refugee camps which straddle the border between Cambodia and Thailand. Thousands of Cambodians could soon be pouring out of the area deeper into Thailand. Because of lack of food, many will starve as did many thousands this past summer, thus reminding the world again of the sounds and sights of emaciated and sick children.

A Moving Sight

In the midst of all this human tragedy, one sight that moved the two Jewish leaders in this border area which resounds with gunfire and shelling in the background, was the Red Magen David emblazoned on the green outfits of the Israeli medical team. "There are four or five such teams throughout the area," Jacobs said. "They obviously are an inspiration to others."

He talked to some of the Israeli doctors and nurses in Hebrew, he related, and he could sense that these were dedicated men and women who would never stop their work of saving human life. The medical team members were married individuals who gave up their daily life in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa to be in this part of the world — thousands of miles from home.

But, continued Jacobs, Jewish involvement in the caring for the starving, for the refugees, is not limited to the Israeli team. In Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, American Jewish concern is recognized by officials at the American Embassy who, according to Jacobs, are well aware of the re-settlement offers made by his synagogue as well as congregations throughout the U.S.

Jacobs pledged to continue his efforts to arouse the American Jewish community to greater re-settlement efforts regarding the boat people.

"My fact finding mission to Hong Kong, Thailand and Cambodia has changed my life and deepened my commitment to re-settlement here in our country and elsewhere. It is a rare privilege

to be alive and to be able to sponsor a family," declared this rabbi who is the chairperson of the (California) Governor's Citizen Task Force of Refugees. While he said that for now, food is getting through to the starving on the border, he added he would continue to plead for American Jews to contribute monies for Cambodian relief.

More Involvement Necessary

As a spiritual leader, Jacobs believes that the American Jewish community must become even more involved in the plight of the boat people and the starving Cambodians. "As a Jew, I came away from the Nazi Holocaust with an obsession. It is from the Book of Leviticus and translated for me it says, 'You shall not stand idly by while the blood of your brothers and sisters cries out to you from the earth.'"

He asserted that he would like every rabbi to visit this part of the world and see the situation personally. "They would never be the same," he said, adding what he termed was an agenda for the American Jewish community now: To translate its Judaism, fewer words and more action, such as re-settlement of more Vietnamese families in the U.S.; and an increase in the amount of funds raised for Cambodian Relief.

Jacobs, who last summer attended the International Conference on the Vietnamese Refugees in Geneva, is proud of a letter which he received from Vice President Walter Mondale, who wrote: "The concern you and the Jewish community in America have shown for the plight of the refugees in Indochina has been greatly appreciated by this Administration and me personally. As we continue to seek ways to lessen the suffering of these people, I am pleased that we can count on your support."

(Tomorrow: Part 3)

MCHENRY TO VISIT THE MIDEAST

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Feb. 6 (JTA) — Donald McHenry, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, who is scheduled to leave Saturday for the Mideast for a two-week seven-nation tour, met today with Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Yehuda Blum, to discuss the situation in the region. The meeting was held at the Israeli official's residence here because he is confined to bed with the flu.

McHenry will start his visit, his first to the region since he replaced Andrew Young as UN Ambassador, in Egypt and from there he will go to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. In a statement issued here, the American Mission said the purpose of McHenry's trip is to explore "substantive, bilateral and regional issues of concern particularly as they bear on the Ambassador's responsibilities at the UN." The statement also said McHenry will meet with "key leaders" of the area.

NEW YORK (JTA) — The new restrictions on Jewish emigration from the USSR, especially severe in the Ukraine which is the seat of the majority of the current applicants, is reflected in January's exit of 2803, according to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. The figure is 30 percent below that of December. There is usually a dip in the January total, the SSSJ said, but never as severe.