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CABINET SIDESTEPS ISSUE OF NEW LEGAL STATUS FOR SETTLEMENTS

By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 12 (JTA) — The Cabinet side-stepped the explosive issue of a new legal status for Jewish settlements on the West Bank yesterday by appointing a special ministerial committee to examine the land needs of seven existing settlements and come up with "practical" measures to fill them. The decision angered the settlers who accused the government of renegeing on a promise by Premier Menachem Begin to initiate changes in the law.

Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, the leading proponent of massive Jewish settlement on the West Bank, reluctantly accepted chairmanship of the new committee at Begin's urging. He had vigorously opposed the idea at yesterday's Cabinet session, arguing that it was a time-wasting ploy by ministers who are against legal action to change the status quo. The committee is supposed to report back to the full Cabinet in two weeks.

Sharon wasted no time. He convened the committee's first meeting at 7:30 this morning. But the Cabinet's decision was seen as a way to head off mounting pressure from ultra-nationalists and religious militants who demand that the government find a legal way to seize Arab-owned land to expand existing settlements and build new ones. The government apparently is reluctant to take up proposals for far-reaching legal action which inevitably would trigger hostile reactions in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Settlers Express Disappointment

Members of the committee of Jewish settlers on the West Bank and Gaza Strip expressed disappointment today. They claimed that the Cabinet's action came nowhere near the promise they said was made by Begin 10 days ago as a condition for ending a month-long hunger strike by the militants. According to the settlers, Begin pledged that a bill would be submitted to the Knesset that would solve the land shortage. Instead, the Cabinet set up yet another committee in still "another attempt not to decide," the settlers said.

According to the Cabinet's decision, the committee will look into the possibilities of "thickening" seven existing settlements in the Judea and Samaria districts by expropriating land for that purpose.

Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir briefed the Cabinet yesterday on the legal and political options available to the government. He dwelt at some length on a proposal by the settlers to apply the Jordanian law of land seizure under which the government may take over private lands for public purposes. At the same time, however, Zamir is understood to have cautioned against that method.

He indicated that it would not be accepted abroad because under international law Israel is regarded as an occupying power and the Jordanian law of "public purposes" is clearly not designed to serve the purposes of the Israeli settlers but those of the local population. Justice Minister Shmuel Tamir, while not ruling out the Jordanian law, warned against its "wholesale application."

The settlers, meanwhile, are threatening to

precipitate a Cabinet crisis unless their demands are met. Yisrael Harel, one of their leaders, said on a television interview yesterday that influential members of the National Religious Party promised that the NRP would quit the coalition government unless the land problem was resolved to their satisfaction.

According to Maariv, such a promise was made by MK Haim Druckman, an NRP hawk. Druckman said the party's executive decided that a solution to the land shortage problem would be the basis for the NRP's continued participation in the government. However, he conceded that this was not an ultimatum. Other NRP leaders denied that there was any party commitment to precipitate a Cabinet crisis.

ADMINISTRATION NOT KEEN ON SADAT PROPOSAL FOR NEW SUMMIT CONFERENCE

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, May 12 (JTA) — Amid reports that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat is pushing for another summit conference in Washington on Israeli-Arab problems, President Carter and Secretary of State Edmund Muskie have been conferring with their top Middle East experts while knowledgeable sources suggest they consider the Sadat proposal is not feasible now.

The summit proposal reportedly was sent to Washington by Sadat, who suspended the autonomy talks without publicly giving reasons. He is expected to discuss them Wednesday when he addresses the Egyptian National Assembly. Latest Cairo reports here say that a reshuffle of his Cabinet is the principal reason, with Sadat himself replacing Mustapha Khalil as Prime Minister.

Khalil, who headed the Egyptian delegation to the autonomy talks, submitted his resignation and that of his Cabinet today. He told reporters in Cairo that this would allow Sadat to make any new changes. He said he would be ready to serve in any position Sadat might ask him to fill. Asked about the status of the autonomy talks, Khalil said, "It all depends on the instructions of President Sadat."

Carter and Muskie have been conferring with their top Middle East experts this weekend on means to have the autonomy talks resumed. Muskie met yesterday at the State Department with Ambassador Sal Linowitz, the President's autonomy negotiator, and Alfred Atherton and Samuel Lewis, ambassadors to Egypt and Israel, respectively. Today, the President, Muskie and Linowitz met for an hour at the White House.

According to sources, the President opposes a summit conference, not primarily because of the Presidential election, as some media are saying, but because he does not want to become entangled in this issue again now and prefers that the designated negotiators continue their work under the Camp David formulas.

No Crisis In Autonomy Talks

Atherton and Lewis were summoned to Washington to confer with Muskie not because of a crisis in the autonomy talks, the sources said, but rather to update Muskie in his preparations for talks with European statesmen in Brussels, where NATO meets tomorrow, and later this week in Vienna where Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and others will be present to mark Austria's 25th anniversary of independence.

British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington is reported as not having convinced the White House or the State Department that the U.S. should go along with an idea he and others in Europe are advising — a conference to find ways of causing Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem and satisfying the Palestinian Arabs with "self-determination." Alterations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, the basis of the Camp David formulas, is a course Carrington advocated in his visit here last week.

The Carter Administration responded to Carrington's overtures, according to sources here, that the Camp David formulas form the only tangible process for Arab-Israeli negotiations and the U.S. is not deviating from them for the time being. "Lord Carrington expounded theories and received responses," a well-placed source said. "The Camp David process is the only thing we have going, so don't kill it," he said the British diplomat was told in effect.

HABIB, BEGIN DISCUSS ISSUE OF WATER RIGHTS BETWEEN ISRAEL, JORDAN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 12 (JTA) — Philip Habib, former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, who is now on special assignment by the Carter Administration, met with Premier Menachem Begin today to discuss a potential dispute between Israel and Jordan over the waters of the Yarmuk River. He is seeking a compromise under which the water rights of both countries would be protected.

Jordan is planning a large-scale irrigation project which includes construction of the Makar-en Dam on the Yarmuk. The river, which is in Jordanian territory, feeds the Jordan River, an important water source for Israel. Begin reportedly told Habib that he did not oppose the Jordanian project but wants to ensure Israel's water rights.

The U.S. has been involved in water rights disputes between Israel and Jordan since the early 1950s. At that time, both countries accepted a plan worked out by an American expert, Eric Johnston.

Today's meeting was attended by Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon and top water resources experts. The discussions were largely on a professional level. Habib will take up the matter with the Jordanians later. He said, however, that he does not intend to discuss Jordan's joining in the autonomy talks when he goes to Amman.

DRINAN LEAVING CONGRESS BUT NOT FIGHT FOR ISRAEL

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, May 12 (JTA) — Rep. Robert Drinan (D, Mass.) will retire from Congress at the close of its current session next January but he intends to continue raising his voice on behalf of Israel and Soviet Jewry "in every possible forum" following that retirement, he has informed the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Father Drinan is abiding by the Papal decree directing him not to seek reelection to a sixth term as a Congressman. As a committed Jesuit priest, his associates reported, he has no choice but to quit public office even though he has served his constituency with obvious satisfaction. Now 60 years old, Drinan entered Congress in 1971 and has been from the beginning consistently outspoken in support of Israel's security and measures to relieve the plight of Soviet Jewry.

Asked by the JTA about his future plans,

Drinan made the following statement:

"In my work in the Congress over the last decade, I have vigorously defended the case for a strong and vital Israel. I have worked to guarantee that Jews have the right to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and I have called to the attention of the world the injustices that have befallen Anatoly Sheharansky and others like him. I have called for a united Jerusalem that will remain the capital of Israel. My tenure in Congress will soon end, yet my commitment to these causes will remain as strong as ever. I shall continue to speak out on behalf of Israel and Soviet Jews in every possible forum."

RABBI DESCRIBES AS 'OUTRAGEOUS' A SUBSTANTIAL VOTE CAST FOR A NAZI

LOS ANGELES, May 12 (JTA) — The substantial but losing vote for Harold Covington, an avowed Nazi, in his bid for nomination as the Republican candidate for North Carolina Attorney General was described as "outrageous" by Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies of Yeshiva University of Los Angeles.

"We are shocked and aghast by the outrageous news that, in the year 1980, 56,000 citizens of North Carolina, representing 100 counties, cast their votes for Covington and that Covington carried 45 of those 100 counties," Hier said.

Covington, 26, is the leader of the National Socialist Party, one of several groups lumped together under the heading of the American Nazi Party. Though he did little campaigning, Covington received 56,006 votes in the primary last Tuesday. Covington has been disavowed by state Republican leaders who admitted he came closer to winning than they had thought possible.

Hier said the vote "shows that forces of hatred and anti-Semitism in our country are moving from street corner brawls to the ballot box and into the political mainstream." He declared "it is time for the political and religious leaders of our country to reflect upon the future course of our society when an avowed Nazi garners 43 percent of a national party's statewide vote."

Covington declared after the primary that "There are many closet Nazis in the Republican Party. Most conservatives are closet Nazis. If you scratch a conservative, you'll find a Nazi underneath, just as, if you scratch a liberal, you'll find a Communist." State Republican Party chairman Jack Lee commented: "I don't say it's an embarrassment. It's a freak."

A TREE GROWS IN WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON, May 12 (JTA) — A living memorial to the unity of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was established yesterday by the planting of a tree in Lafayette Park, opposite the White House. The ceremonies, marking the 13th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, were conducted by the Zionist Organization of America.

The project was sponsored by the American Zionist Federation and its constituent organizations in cooperation with the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington. The tree was unveiled by Rabbi Joseph Sternstein, president of the AZF, and Ann Block, president of the Washington Zionist Federation. Songs and poetry of Jerusalem accompanied the planting which was authorized by the National Parks Service.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israel Army engineers last Friday demolished three houses in Gaza owned by three Arabs suspected of throwing a hand grenade in Gaza's main street.

NCC GOVERNING BOARD MOVES AHEAD ON NEW MIDEAST POLICY STATEMENT

By David Friedman

NEW YORK, May 12 (JTA) — The governing board of the National Council of Churches (NCC) has completed the "first reading" of a proposed new policy statement on the Middle East which calls on the Arabs to recognize Israel "as a Jewish State" and on Israel to recognize the right of Palestinians to "national self-determination" including "a sovereign state."

The 26-page draft discussed at the board's semi-annual meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana last week, calls on all parties to end violence; urges Palestinians and Arab states to recognize Israel as a Jewish State with secure, defined and recognized borders; and urges Israel to withdraw from occupied territories and recognize Palestinian rights to "national self-determination" and "a Palestinian entity, including a sovereign state."

It also calls for international guarantees of security for Israel and any Palestinian entity created by negotiations as well as solutions to the problems of displaced refugees.

An NCC spokesman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today that the committee which drafted the resolution will now consider changes proposed by board members during the Indianapolis meeting and by any of the 32 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox church groups which are members of the NCC. The committee will then present the statement for a second and final reading at the board's meeting in November.

ADL Critical Of Report

Meanwhile, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has criticized as "naïve" a report on the Middle East also presented to the NCC's governing board at the Indianapolis meeting.

While saying that the document contains "certain positive elements," Nathan Perlmutter, ADL national director, declared that "it strains credulity for a panel of the National Council of Churches, itself a religious body, to call for U.S. dialogue with the PLO terrorists and murderers who are allied with the America-hating, fanatical Ayatollah Khomeini and with the Soviet Union, religion's sworn enemy."

Perlmutter said that instead of charging that the Camp David agreement is "fundamentally flawed," the report would have been far more constructive had it urged the rejectionist Arabs to join the Camp David peace process.

Report Titled Guidance, Not Policy

The report was made by the NCC's Middle East Panel which earlier this year made a two-week fact-finding visit to Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. The NCC spokesman told the JTA that the report was not policy but given to the governing board for "guidance" in considering the proposed policy statement. He noted that the policy statement does not mention the PLO but speaks in more "general" terms only of Palestinians.

Perlmutter said that "we appreciate that the panelists call upon the PLO to renounce violence, change the PLO covenant and accept the legitimacy of Israel." But, he added, "In spite of this, illogically, the report encourages the PLO in its intransigence because it calls for open dialogue whether or not these changes are made. We also reject its call for Palestinian self-determination, a code phrase for a PLO state, and

changes in UN (Security Council) Resolution 242 which scuttle the sense of the resolution."

He said that in urging Palestinian self-determination, the NCC panel "is inviting the establishment of a state which, as a surrogate for the Soviet Union, would be allied against American interests."

The NCC decided last November to draft a policy statement on the Middle East after it rejected a resolution by the Antiochian Christian Archdiocese of New York and All North America accusing Israel of violating human rights. The Antiochian Church group has repeatedly sought to get the NCC to adopt anti-Israel resolutions. The NCC spokesman said today that once a policy statement is adopted, that will be the policy of the NCC for the next 10 years.

In making the decision last November to draft a policy statement, the NCC also voted to send a fact-finding panel to the Mideast. Prior to its trip, the committee held hearings in New York and Washington which were boycotted by Jewish organizations because they considered that the NCC had demonstrated a pro-Arab bias. However, Jewish groups met in late March with the NCC's human rights committee to discuss the proposed policy statement.

2 ISRAELI SOLDIERS HELD IN CONNECTION WITH A CACHE OF ARMS

JERUSALEM, May 12 (JTA) — Police are holding two Israeli soldiers arrested over the weekend in connection with a cache of weapons and explosives found on the roof of the Yeshivat Hakotel in the Old City. A warrant officer (the top rank of non-commissioned officer) was detained last Friday and a corporal was taken into custody Saturday. Their names have not been made public, but neither was said to have any connection with the religious school.

Rabbi Yeshayahu Hadari, principal of the yeshiva, summoned police last Thursday after students reported seeing two young uniformed men carrying boxes to the roof. The boxes were found to contain 100 kilograms of high explosives, 15 hand grenades, 14 rifle grenades and a variety of fuses and detonators. An investigation established that the arms were stolen from the military base where the warrant officer served.

The purpose of the cache was not clear. But the authorities assume that they were intended for acts of sabotage against the Arab population in retaliation for the terrorist ambush killings of six yeshiva students in Hebron on May 2. According to the police, their investigation has found no connection between the two men detained and any other persons.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — A non-alcoholic wine has been developed by two Tel Aviv University scientists which, they say, mimics the color, taste and aroma of regular wine but will cost less. According to Prof. Henry Margulis and Avraham Lifshitz, their fascimile is made from natural substances that are a by-product of the wine industry. They envision a market for it among people who must limit their alcoholic intake for reasons of health, religion or ethics.

NEW YORK (JTA) — Americans visited Israel in record numbers during the first quarter of 1980, an impressive 10 percent increase over the same period of 1979, it was reported here by Israel Zuriel, Israel's Commissioner for Tourism to North America. Last year 300,000 American tourists, more than ever before, vacationed in Israel, he said. He predicted that low Apex scheduled fares and low-cost charter flight programs to Israel will encourage the growth of U.S. tourism to Israel during the rest of 1980.

ORDINATION OF WOMEN AS RABBIS IS HIGH ON THE RA CONVENTION AGENDA

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y., May 12 (JTA) — The Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis, opened its 80th annual convention at the Concord Hotel here today with the controversial issue of the ordination of women high on the agenda.

Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the organization, referred to it in his opening address when he urged the 600 delegates to approach the subject in a balanced way that respects the sensitivities of the traditionalists who oppose ordination of women but would recognize "that the liberal also has a conscience." The convention will continue through Thursday.

The debate is expected to be enlivened by the lobbying activities of the Group for the Rabbinic Ordination of Women (GROW) which plans to present a petition signed by Conservative lay people and rabbis from all parts of the country who support the ordination of women. GROW is supporting a resolution calling for the prompt acceptance of women into the rabbinical school of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America as candidates for ordination.

Halacha Is Not Part Of The Issue

Kelman, in his address, observed that halacha — Jewish religious law — is not part of the issue. The title of rabbi "is not sacramental, giving the holder certain powers that a person without holy order does not have. Why then the debates, the tensions, the accusations and the cross accusations, the threats and fears which have become part of this debate?" he asked. He said that as far as the ordination of women is concerned, "I would be opposed to a situation where every synagogue would be obliged to have a woman rabbi."

However, he declared, "the Conservative movement must find a way to protect those who want a woman rabbi and those who are opposed, to respect the consciences of the traditionalists and the consciences of those who see the women's issue as a moral issue."

Growth Of Rabbinical Assembly

Kelman devoted much of his address to the growth of the Rabbinical Assembly from a membership of slightly over 300 in 1950 to 1200 today and the progress achieved by the Conservative movement as a whole in that period. The movement, he said, has "emerged from the smallest religious denominational group in the Jewish community to the largest both in the U.S. and Canada." It now "dominates the spiritual landscape of Latin America."

There are 30 Conservative synagogues in Israel and an emerging Conservative movement in Europe, he said. He also noted the establishment within the last 18 months of a Zionist Conservative organization; Mercatz.

Kelman said that at the heart of the Conservative movement is "our commitment to pluralism." He "would not want to live in a Jewish world where all Jews were Conservative Jews, or Reform Jews, or Orthodox Jews," Kelman said. "This rich kaleidoscope is at the heart of our attitude towards the historical development of Judaism which recognizes, accepts and cherishes differences with reverence."

At another session today, Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat of Montreal proposed that the Conservative

movement establish a full-time adult "yeshiva" program that would include a Conservative "yeshiva" network in America and a related yeshiva-synagogue system in Israel. He said two elements would distinguish it from similar schools with fundamentalist views — the admission of young women on a co-educational basis and the scientific study of texts.

WJC EUROPEAN BRANCH RAPS MIDEAST RESOLUTION BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

PARIS, May 12 (JTA) — The European Branch of the World Jewish Congress, which held a two-day meeting here last week, expressed its deep consternation at the resolution of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on the Middle East situation which called for the replacement or amendment of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and expressed doubts about the Camp David accords as the basis for a comprehensive Mideast settlement.

The Assembly resolution, which was approved last month by 170 votes with no opposition and only 10 abstentions, viewed the Camp David accords as seriously jeopardizing the current peace negotiations.

The WJC meeting also expressed its strong objection to the Assembly's equating the right of Israel to exist with the demand for the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a negotiating partner in the peace talks. The meeting noted that the PLO once again displayed its barbarism and its declared aim to destroy Israel by wantonly murdering six yeshiva students and wounding 16 others in an attack on Jews in Hebron on May 2.

Representatives from 20 Jewish communities took part in the two-day WJC meeting, including delegates from Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The meeting marked the return of the Council of Jewish Communities of Morocco to active membership in the WJC.

At the meeting, the WJC European Branch's European Economic Community Committee, together with the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF) decided on practical measures following its recent London meeting with regard to representations to the EEC concerning the Mideast peace negotiations.

Move Against Anti-Semitism

Against the background of the increase of anti-Semitic incidents, the meeting decided to undertake a study aimed at harmonizing the laws of the various European countries to ban incitement to hatred on grounds of race or religion. It also decided on a number of measures directed towards improving pedagogical methods in the field of youth education against anti-Semitism.

In this connection, the European Branch was invited to take part in a conference on intolerance organized by the European Youth Center of the Council of Europe to be held at the end of 1980, following a proposal submitted by the European Youth Advisory Council of the WJC.

ALBANY, N.Y. (JTA) — Gov. Hugh Carey has proclaimed May 14 as "Jerusalem Day" in New York State. Declaring in his proclamation that Jerusalem "is a holy city," Carey also said that "for the Jewish people, it is not only a city of holy places, it is a city that for two and a half millennia has served as the symbol of hope for a people who were persecuted, hunted and massacred, but who never despaired of its promise.... Jerusalem will always be the eternal capital of the Jewish people; the symbol of their hopes and the focus of their prayers."