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REAGAN STRESSES THERE IS NO DEADLINE FOR AN AUTONOMY ACCORD

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- President Reagan stressed today that there is no deadline for Israel and Egypt to reach an agreement on autonomy for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But he expressed hope that by April 26, when Israel is scheduled to complete its withdrawal from Sinai, they will have at least begun work on a "plan for proceeding" with autonomy.

The President, answering questions at a press conference nationally televised from the East Room of the White House, conceded that the autonomy issue is the "toughest problem" in efforts to achieve a Middle East settlement. "We want to help if we can, if we could come up with some idea that might be helpful in the autonomy talks," he said, but stressed that "we won't set a deadline."

He noted, however, that he hoped that by the time Israel leaves Sinai, "we will at least" begin by next April to "get down to a kind of plan for proceeding." The President gave no details of how the U.S. could be "helpful" in reaching an autonomy agreement.

He noted that Secretary of State Alexander Haig was in Israel and Egypt recently on a "fact-finding" mission and said the Secretary would return later but did not give a date. Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir told the Israeli Cabinet Sunday that Haig would be returning to the region on January 28.

REPORT SHARON HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING EGYPTIANS TO AGREE ON A NUMBER OF HIS PROPOSALS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- According to Israeli reporters accompanying Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, he has had extraordinary success during his current visit to Cairo in gaining Egyptian agreement on several important matters related to Israel's withdrawal from Sinai next April 26.

While there has been no official confirmation, the Egyptians reportedly have accepted Sharon's proposal that the international peacekeeping force in Sinai would patrol the strategic islands of Tiran and Senafir at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba; that Egypt will purchase the tourism infrastructure built by Israel at Sharm el-Sheikh; and that Egypt will open consulates at Eilat and Haifa. Agreement also has been reached on international charter flights from Eilat to the Sinai airfields.

A joint committee has yet to settle the problem of the international border which runs through the town of Rafah. Part of the town is in the Gaza Strip and part in Sinai. Israel has asked that a hotel there be included in the territory it occupies while the Egyptians say it stands on their territory.

ISRAEL TO SEEK 'CLARIFICATIONS' FROM EUROPEAN NATIONS CONCERNING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SINAI FORCE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- Israel is expected to ask for "clarifications" of nearly

identical letters received from Britain, France, Italy and Holland last week reiterating their willingness to participate in the Sinai peacekeeping force. Israel wants the four powers to make clearer the distinction between the terms of their participation and their earlier statements which referred to the European Economic Community's (EEC) 1980 Venice declaration.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig reportedly urged Israel to accept the four powers' letters during his visit here last week. Israeli officials acknowledged today that the delay in doing this stemmed from certain reservations still held by Israel. The Venice declaration was unacceptable because it called for association of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the Mideast peace process.

Israel wants the European powers to acknowledge that the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai derives its mandate solely from the Camp David agreements and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty before they join it.

Diplomatic contacts on this matter between Israel and the four European governments have been kept on a low key. The letters are regarded here as non-polemical, deliberately non-provocative and intended to make it easier for Israel to approve of their participation in the Sinai force. Premier Menachem Begin consulted with Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir on the matter this morning. Officials denied that Begin took a tougher position than Shamir and said both men wanted clarifications.

DRUCKMAN SAYS HE IS CONFIDENT ISRAEL'S FINAL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SINAI WILL BE HALTED

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- Knesset member Chaim Druckman, who is Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs, said here today that he is confident that Israel's final withdrawal from Sinai will be halted. "As a member of the Knesset from the government coalition and a Deputy Minister, I can tell you that the withdrawal should and will be halted," Druckman, a rabbi and a member of the National Religious Party, declared at a press conference at the Roosevelt Hotel.

The press conference was sponsored by an organization called Americans for a Safe Israel. Druckman arrived here today as part of a six-member delegation representing the movement in Israel to halt the final withdrawal from Sinai. The delegation will be in the U.S. for three weeks to present its view to the American public that the withdrawal, scheduled to be completed next April 26, would endanger Israel's security and survival.

Druckman told the press conference that a petition signed by one million Israelis was completed recently, urging the government to stop the withdrawal from Sinai. Claiming that when the peace treaty with Egypt was signed in 1979 he did not believe that the withdrawal could be stopped, Druckman declared:

"But things have changed. The mood in Israel has changed. There is now a groundswell of public opinion in Israel which realizes the danger to the State and opposes further withdrawal from Sinai."

Other participants in today's press conference were Ella Weizman, a resident of northern Sinai who heads the delegation, and Miriam Levinger who is from Hebron. Weizman also claimed that the mood in Israel has changed and that more and more people are opposed to the withdrawal from Sinai. She said, however, in response to a question, that they do not intend to use violence to halt the withdrawal. She said she believed that the growing movement against withdrawal would create the conditions to stop it.

The three members of the delegation at the press conference said that during their visit to the U.S., they intend to meet with Jewish leaders. In reply to a question by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, they said their trip is financed by American Jews, among them Americans for a Safe Israel, Young Israel and other Jewish groups which do not wish to be identified at this stage.

They said that during their tour they will inform the American public of "multiple violations of the peace treaty by Egypt, Egyptian preparations for war, the massive arming of the Arab world and the importance of Sinai, Golan, Judaea and Samaria to Israel's security."

ISRAEL DENIES SYRIANS FIRED AT ISRAELI AIRCRAFT

TEL AVIV, Jan. 19 (JTA) — A military spokesman denied today that Syria had fired anti-aircraft missiles at Israeli aircraft on a reconnaissance mission over Lebanon. The spokesman confirmed that there had been "routine reconnaissance flights" but the pilots reported no missiles fired at them, he said. Reports from Damascus and Beirut today claimed that Syrian SAM-6 missiles in the Bekaa valley in eastern Lebanon were fired at Israeli aircraft flying over the area.

RABBI SAYS PRIORITY OF U.S. JEWS SHIFTING AWAY FROM ISRAEL AND TOWARDS THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

FREEHOLD, N.J., Jan. 19 (JTA) — The president of the Rabbinical Council of America, an association of Orthodox rabbis, asserted here that the center of gravity of American Jewish interest was moving away from Israel and toward the American Jewish community.

"It is a disturbing and perilous change," Rabbi Sol Roth told several hundred leaders and Rabbinical Council delegates at the organization's annual mid-winter conference.

Declaring that American Jews "may be beginning to take Israel for granted," he asserted that vision of American Jews "of what is indeed in our best interests may be distorted by parochial concerns." He said that "whatever the reasons for this change may be, it is distressing" that it is "taking place."

As evidence, Roth mentioned the debate over the Reagan Administration's successful effort to win Congressional approval of its plans to sell AWACS reconnaissance planes and enhanced weaponry for F-15s being sold to Saudi Arabia. In that debate, Roth asserted, "the issue of anti-Semitism in America was projected into prominence with a concomitant partial eclipse of our concern for Israel."

Arguing that anti-Semitism is unlikely to take on "the dimension of a major movement or a state policy, not in this country," Roth asserted that, accordingly, "our greater concern must be with the State of Israel" and that "we ought not to be distracted by placing too much emphasis on subsidiary consideration," such as the anti-Semitic tactics charged against the Reagan Administration by foes of the Saudi arms deal concerned with the security of Israel.

He said another issue showing American Jewry shifting its center of gravity is the degree to which allocations from Federations' fund-raising campaigns "have

been changing" with the result that "in many communities, more and more is provided for American Jewish needs at the expense of Israel."

Calling this an "unhappy" and "unfortunate" development, Roth added that "if local needs grow, more funds must be generated for them but the requirements of Israel are escalating as well, and to these we must respond adequately. For our own sake, Israel must not be allowed to suffer."

As another example, Roth said, "an essentially American debate on religious pluralism in Israel is taking place." He said "one of the most distressing features of that debate is the explicit suggestion by some that if Conservative and Reform rabbis are not granted recognition in Israel, the congregations they represent will reduce or eliminate their support of the United Jewish Appeal."

Arguing that "a suggestion of this kind was not only impossible but inconceivable a decade ago," Roth said "perceptions of Israel have changed, priorities have been transformed. The situation is hazardous."

BEN-ELISSAR SUCCEEDS ARENS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) — Elishah Ben-Elissar, who was Israel's first Ambassador to Egypt, was elected by Herut today to be chairman of the Knesset's powerful and prestigious Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. He succeeds Moshe Arens, Israel's Ambassador-designate to the United States.

Ben-Elissar won the post in a secret ballot by Herut's Knesset faction over Herut MK Yosef Rom, reportedly by a narrow margin. He said later that he had been given "a heavy responsibility" but was confident that his 15 years of experience in defense and foreign policy matters would help him handle it.

Ben-Elissar, 49, a protégé of Premier Menachem Begin, served in Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, before joining Herut in the early 1970s. After the Likud victory in the 1977 elections, Begin appointed him Director General of the Prime Minister's office and in that capacity he headed the first Israeli peace delegation to Cairo.

He was appointed Israel's envoy to Egypt after the peace treaty was signed in 1979. He resigned that post last year and was elected to the Knesset in the June, 1980 elections.

VERDICT EXPECTED NEXT WEEK IN TRIAL OF TWO TERRORISTS WHO ATTACKED JEWISH CENTER LAST AUGUST

By Monika Brenner and Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, Jan. 19 (JTA) — A verdict is expected next Monday in the trial of two Palestinian terrorists accused of attacking the Jewish community center here last August in which two persons were killed and 18 injured. If found guilty they face life imprisonment.

The trial of Marwan Hasan, 25 and Hesham Mohammed Radjeh, 21, opened yesterday in a heavily guarded courtroom. Radjeh is also charged with the murder of Vienna city councilman Heinz Nittel, a friend of Israel, who was fatally shot last May 1. He admitted the crime after his arrest but later retracted his confession. A third Palestinian, Bahij Younis, will go on trial at a later date. Police believe he planned the attack on the community center and provided Radjeh with the gun that killed Nittel.

The indictment charges Hasan and Radjeh with murder, attempted murder, illegal possession of arms and war material. It states that on August 29

they approached the Jewish community center on the Seitenstaetengasse in the inner city of Vienna and, as worshippers left the building after prayers, threw several hand grenades and fired more than 60 shots with sub-machine guns. Ulrike Kohout, 25 and Nathan Friend, 75 were killed. Two policemen and 16 other persons were wounded.

Claims He Was Obeying Orders

The two defendants are linked to Al-Asifa, an extremist Palestinian terrorist organization. Radjeh confessed to attacking the community center but retracted an earlier statement that he had wanted to kill as many Jews as possible. He said that was the policy of Al Asifa but that he no longer believed in it.

Hasan did not plead guilty to murder. He characterized himself as a Palestinian soldier and said he was obeying orders to attack Israeli soldiers. According to Hasan, his orders were to shoot persons leaving the house on Seitenstaetengasse because they were Israeli soldiers in civilian clothes. He said they opened fire first and threw hand grenades at him. Hasan was wounded in the chest by the bodyguard of a Jewish businessman.

Hasan's attorney argued that the accused had acted as a soldier and did not know he was violating Austrian law. Hasan insisted he did not intend to hurt Austrians. The defense demanded that Austrian Interior Minister Erwin Lanc be called to testify. Hasan alleged that Lanc had taken bribes from the Palestine Liberation Organization to allow a heavily armed PLO commando group to leave Austria after it was spotted by the authorities.

The judge noted that the two Palestinians were caught smuggling arms and were tried. One was convicted. Both were immediately expelled from the country. The Interior Ministry issued a statement rejecting Hasan's charges as slanderous and without basis in fact.

Bombing Victim In Germany Dies

Meanwhile, a 14-month-old child died in West Berlin yesterday from wounds sustained when terrorists bombed an Israel-owned restaurant in that city last Friday. Twenty-four others were wounded in the attack, including the child's parents. Police did not release the family name and identified the child only as Jennifer.

A \$50,000 reward has been offered for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators. Two Palestinian groups claimed responsibility for the outrage. Six Palestinian suspects were arrested shortly after the bombing, but were released for lack of evidence.

West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt sent a telegram to Werner Nachmann, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, in which he said:

"I am deeply dismayed by news of the abominable attack on the Israeli restaurant in Berlin. I know my countrymen join me in condemning this immense crime. This act strengthens the firm determination of the federal government to confront every kind of anti-Semitism with all legal means. I assure you and our fellow Jewish countrymen of my sorrow and sympathy."

SCLC DENIES INVITING ARAFAT TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 (JTA) — The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) denied today that it has extended an invitation to Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat to visit the United States.

A spokesperson for the SCLC's Atlanta office told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by telephone that "We have no knowledge of anyone extending an invitation or any one accepting an invitation."

The question was prompted by a report in the Saudi Arabian English-language daily, Saudi Arabian Daily News, quoting Arafat as saying he had been invited to the U.S. by the SCLC in Atlanta and would accept the invitation from the American civil rights group. According to the report from Jeddah, Arafat said he wanted to speak to the American people about peace in the Middle East.

He did not say how he would obtain a visa. Arafat visited New York in 1974 to address the UN General Assembly for which he did not require an American visa. He was restricted to an area in the general vicinity of UN headquarters.

STUDY SHOWS INTERMARRIAGE AMONG SOVIET JEWS APPROACHES 50 PERCENT

LONDON, Jan. 19 (JTA) — According to a World Jewish Congress study, nearly one of every two marriages among the Jewish population in the Soviet Union involved a non-Jewish partner.

This finding is contained in a report released here by the research arm of the WJC, the Institute of Jewish Affairs. The study, based on official Soviet statistics from the 1960's until the mid-1970's, examined marriage patterns in four Soviet republics and three cities. The quantity and spread of the data make it possible to estimate the general rate of mixed marriages, the report noted.

In the regions under study, the percentage of mixed marriages ranged from a high of 76.7 percent in the Ukraine to 27.7 percent in the city of Makhachkala bordering the Caspian Sea. After calculating the weighted average of these percentages, the study concludes that the rate of mixed marriages in every 100 marriages in which at least one partner was Jewish ranged between 40 and 50.

At the same time, the data also suggests a greater tendency among Jews to marry within their own ethnic group than was the case among other national minorities in the Soviet Union. As the report states, "this strengthens the supposition that the Jews, more than other ethnic groups, choose their marriage partners within their own fold; this does not, however, decrease the extent of exogamous marriages among them." The WJC study also finds that the tendency among Jewish males to "marry out" is much higher than among Jewish females.

A Common Occurrence Noted

The incidence of marriages between persons belonging to different nationalities is quite common in the Soviet Union, the statistics reveal. In the case of Jews, these instances have added significance since, as the report notes, "the overwhelming majority of the children of mixed unions do not identify themselves as Jews when applying for their identity documents and do not, in their majority consider themselves as part of the Jewish people."

The WJC study was prepared for the Institute by Dr. Mordechai Altshuler. His findings appear in the most recent issue of "Soviet Jewish Affairs," the Institute's journal on Jewish problems in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

An earlier study reported on by the World Jewish Congress demonstrated how statistics on intermarriage bear on the question of Soviet Jewish emigration. That study indicated a strong correlation between the ethnic make-up of the marriage and the likelihood of aliya to Israel.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES A PUBLIC 'TRIAL' ON YERIDA

By Gil Sedan

HERZLIYA, Jan. 19 (JTA) — A meeting dealing with an issue of great import to the future of Israel recently took place here. The very fact that this gathering occurred at all seemed to contradict the charges which the meeting was to consider.

Labor Alignment Knesset member Chaim Herzog, a former Ambassador to the United Nations, told several hundred high school students, their teachers and their parents that one of the key causes for yerida (emigration of Israelis) was the lack of public interest in Israel and Zionism and Judaism.

On the surface, it seemed that Herzog was addressing the wrong audience. Wasn't the very fact that several hundred Israelis had gathered for an entire evening to discuss yerida proof that Israelis did care?

The occasion was a "public trial on yerida." The "courtroom" was the Histadrut building here, and the participants were 11th graders at Herzliya municipal high school. Any such gathering on an evening when Israeli TV shows "The Boston Strangler" would signify some interest on the subject of yerida.

Indications Of The Validity Of The Charges

However, there were at least two indications that there was some validity to Herzog's charge. One, the strong and angry reactions to the "defense witnesses," those courageous Israelis who tried to present a logical explanation of why some Israelis can no longer live in this country. The audience was quite impatient with some of the arguments advanced. When journalist Idit Ne'eman tried to present her arguments for the defense, the young audience interrupted her with angry interjections.

The other indication that Herzog was apparently on the right track in charging that the subject of yerida was not a priority issue for Israelis, was that the initiative for the meeting did not come from the students nor even from the school administration. It took place as part of an ongoing drive by the Zionist Council to promote Zionist issues among young people.

Such "public trials" are now taking place at least twice a month in various parts of the country. Young people are encouraged to attend and to give thought to an issue which will very much determine the future of Israel.

Once involved with the issue of yerida, on a "game" basis — a courtroom setting, with a judge, prosecution, defense and witnesses — the young people attending the public "trials" enjoy them and deal with the issue with seriousness and devotion.

Painful Reality Of Emigration

The attitude at the meeting in Herzliya was symptomatic of the public's attitude in general. Israelis do not like to think about other Israelis leaving them behind. The figures explain why. Only 12,000 immigrants arrived in Israel last year. Figures on Israelis leaving the country permanently vary from 13,000 to 24,000. The discrepancy in these figures depends how one defines leaving the country permanently, because very few Israelis actually declare that they are emigrating.

Whatever the real figures are, one fact is definite: in the last two years, for the first time since the establishment of the State, there were more emigrants than immigrants.

Witness For The Prosecution

The prosecution at the meeting in Herzliya argued that there was no real reason for emigration; the general economic situation in the country was good, and, contrary to the situation in Western countries, there

was hardly any unemployment. The emigrant, the prosecutor charged, was not only acting against Zionism and contrary to his national duties, he was also acting against himself and his family.

The defense raised a moral issue: "Does anyone have the right to compel others to live in a place in which they are unhappy?" The defense stressed that it did not want to defend yerida as a phenomenon, but rather a person's right to emigrate.

"Yerida is a symptom of an illness in our society," the defense said. "It is not the illness itself."

The key witness for the prosecution was Herzog. He recalled that during the United Nations General Assembly debate on Zionism in November 1975 one of the arguments raised by Israel's enemies was that if Zionism was a positive solution for the Jewish people, why was it that so many Israelis were leaving?

Herzog charged that the yored (emigrant) had a negative effect on the Jewish communities in the diaspora because the emigrant tended to slander Israel in order to rationalize his leaving. Furthermore, he charged, many of the emigrants have not improved their economic status, and would have lived just as well had they stayed in Israel.

However, despite his strong criticism, Herzog said he did not share a comment made once by the previous Premier, Yitzhak Rabin, that the emigrants were "weaklings" who had "fallen by the wayside." Herzog said an effort should be made to bring the emigrants back to Israel.

Witness For The Defense

Shinui Knesset member Mordechai Virshubsky was the key witness for the defense. He said that the issue is the illness of Israeli society and not yerida. If society functioned properly, he said, there would be no problem of yerida and many olim would come to Israel. "We had known emigration in the past, but it was always overshadowed by progress in the country," Virshubsky said. Only in recent years, he noted, has the problem of yerida grown acute.

He ruled out taking any legal measures against emigration because this would only increase the number of yordim. He said that ever since Rabin attacked yerida, the number of yordim grew. "Israelis will cease to look for their fortunes overseas if they feel more at home in Israel," Virshubsky stated.

Gadi Nu of Herzliya, who recently returned from a nine-year stay in Canada, had very few good words to say about the Israeli community in Toronto. "I hardly know one Israeli who is really happy there," he said. "They all dream of returning to Israel. The trouble is that some of them get tied down to the place, and they never fulfill their dreams. When I left for Canada I felt like a deserter, but there was a family problem that I had to solve. As soon as I did, I returned."

Value Of The Public 'Trials'

The "trial" ended with no verdict. The issue was too complex to try to reach a court consensus. The main point of the "trial" was to raise the issue, and indeed it was thoroughly discussed. How much do public "trials" like this one in Herzliya and others around the country contribute to raising the consciousness of young Israelis about the issue of yerida? How many of them will still live in Israel 10 years from now? These are questions with no answers, at least at this time. The public "trials" dealing with this issue are really the minimum that is being done to place the issue of yerida on the national agenda.