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FRANCE, EGYPT INTEND TO "PUSH FOR AN OVERALL POLITICAL SOLUTION" TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

PARIS, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- An effort to launch a joint Franco-Egyptian Middle East peace plan got underway here yesterday at a 90-minute meeting between Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros Ghali and French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson.

The essence of the effort, Ghali told reporters after the meeting at Quai d'Orsay, is to find "an overall political solution" to the Palestinian problem. Ghali said that the expulsion of the PLO forces from Lebanon was not a solution to the Palestinian problem, which is the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

According to both French and Egyptian sources here, the Cheysson-Ghali meeting was characterized by a "remarkable degree" of understanding by both sides of the steps required to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Mideast crisis.

Although both sides refrained from detailing the elements of what was dubbed "a renewed Franco-Egyptian diplomatic initiative" on the Mideast in general and the Palestinian problem in particular, it is believed that both countries will soon publish an updated version of their joint draft resolution submitted to the United Nations Security Council on July 2.

Refers To New Voices From Washington

The draft, which was criticized by Israel, calls on Israel and the PLO to mutually recognize each other, thus providing the foundation for the long-range solution of the Palestinian problem.

The United States rejected the draft when it was presented to the Security Council, but sources in Paris express the hope that the U.S. will reconsider the draft, at least in its updated version, in view of "the new voices coming these days from Washington." This referred to recent declarations by Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, both of whom have stated that a solution of the Palestinian problem is a priority issue.

Ghali told reporters here that "certain aspects of the (joint France-Egyptian) plan must now be brought up to date" and that the governments of both countries "are coordinating their views. We are quite flexible and must consult with the United States and other countries concerned." He added he felt Washington was reassessing its Mideast policy and that Egypt would seek to explain aspects of the crisis to the Reagan Administration.

Egyptian and French diplomatic sources say one aim of the joint draft resolution is to save face for the PLO after its defeat in Lebanon. While Egyptian diplomats emphasize that the expulsion of the PLO forces from Lebanon was a "short-sighted" approach, French diplomats prefer to tread more gingerly in assessing the situation.

The French are more sensitive to the evacuation process, which they consider to be fragile, because their troops are in Lebanon as part of the international force along with American and Italian troops overseeing the withdrawal of the terrorists.

The French, therefore, use more moderate language when discussing what they call the "post-Beirut options."

Cheysson-Sees Role For PLO

Nevertheless, Cheysson, in an interview published yesterday in the daily, *Sud Ouest*, stated: "We believe that negotiations must be held with the Palestinians, and for these negotiations the only known partner is the PLO. The Americans do not say that, or are not in a position to say that, because of their commitments to Israel."

However, Cheysson noted an important development on the part of the U.S. with the stance taken by Shultz. The U.S. Secretary of State said Sunday in an interview on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" program that the Camp David peace process can be interpreted in many ways and that the Palestinians should have a role in determining the conditions under which they live. This was seen as a reference to some form of Palestinian participation in the peace negotiating process.

Cheysson's reference to the PLO as the "only known partner" for the negotiations with the Palestinians was in contrast to the statement President Francois Mitterrand made last Tuesday. In meeting with Israel's Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, Mitterrand called for the "participation" of the PLO in the Mideast peace process as "one element, among others."

In his television appearance later the same day, the President said France would continue to seek a state for the Palestinians, but refrained from saying that the PLO is the "sole representative" of the Palestinian people.

Elements In The Updated Draft

The updated Franco-Egyptian draft resolution will probably focus on an effort to modify Security Council Resolution 242 by replacing the characterization of the Palestinians as "refugees" as is now contained in Resolution 242. The joint draft is also likely to call for some sort of PLO "participation" in the peace process, although it is not clear what the dimensions of this "participation" would be.

Meanwhile, French and Egyptian diplomats are waiting for further clarifications from the U.S. on the views expounded by Shultz and Weinberger before they make public their updated version.

BEGIN OPTIMISTIC THAT WITH THE PLO'S DEPARTURE, THE MILITARY STAGE OF THE WAR IN LEBANON HAS ENDED By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin today expressed optimism that with the departure of the Palestine Liberation Organization from Beirut proceeding as scheduled, the military stage of the war in Lebanon has concluded. But Begin said that this should not be taken as an indication to others that Israel has foreclosed the possibility of other military actions.

At a meeting of the Knesset Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Begin said Israel has no intention to attack Syria, whose occupation force continues to occupy parts of eastern Lebanon, or Jordan, which yesterday warmly welcomed several hundred of the

first PLO evacuees from the Lebanese capital. The Israeli Premier remained firm on his position that if attacked, Israel would not hesitate to return fire.

Today's committee meeting was also the scene of sharp exchanges between Begin and opposition Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, who charged that the government had no need to go beyond the originally stated intentions of the "Peace for Galilee" operation. He stated objectives of the operation were to push the PLO out of rocket and artillery range of Israel's northern border settlements, an estimated distance of 25 miles.

Peres condemned the bombing of west Beirut, saying the action, joined with the blockades imposed by the Israel Defense Force around the Lebanese capital cutting off water supplies, has caused damage to Israel's international image. He said that at no time during the Labor Alignment governments of the past had civilian targets been bombed.

Begin used the opportunity at the committee meeting to settle scores that have developed between the two factions concerning the war effort. "One cannot speak today of the Alignment," he charged. "Every member of your faction is expressing a different view."

Explains Israel's Original Intention

Begin explained that Israel had no intention originally to move into west Beirut but said that if the government had declared so publicly, the PLO would have not been pressured to evacuate the capital. He accused the Labor Alignment of failing to view the actions in Lebanon in proper perspective and not being able to admit to the government's achievements in ridding Lebanon of the PLO.

Begin said he could cite "tens of examples" of where the Labor governments "did just the same" as his Likud leadership acted in the Lebanon action. But Peres replied: "Why even the Deputy Premier demanded the dismissal of the Defense Minister," Ariel Sharon.

According to Begin, no minister had made such a demand in the Cabinet. But Peres retorted, "Although the name has not been publicized, I believe the journalists who wrote that these comments were made by a senior minister. There have been in recent weeks reports that the Cabinet was sharply divided on the 10-hour bombing Sharon had ordered on August 12 which continued until President Reagan called from Washington demanding that the bombing cease."

Wants Commission To Study The War

Meanwhile, Labor MK Yossi Sarid said the entire war was unnecessary and repeated his earlier demand for a commission to be formed to study the "development of the war." Sarid said that as a result of the Lebanon action, the PLO may have strengthened its political standing and terrorism may increase. He contended the PLO was militarily weak in Lebanon prior to the Israeli action.

Begin said, "If you convince your own party to make such a demand officially the commission will be erected in 24 hours, but it will also look into the behavior of some opposition members during the fighting."

Begin also charged Peres with having "sold" his ideas of Israeli concessions on the West Bank during his recent visit to the U.S. Begin said Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has already begun initiating proposals in that direction.

Nevertheless, Begin said Israel would soon resume the long-stalled negotiations for Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said, however, that Israel would not accept Egyptian dictations, which was an apparent response to a statement published yesterday by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak calling for a halt to Israeli settlement policies in the occupied territories.

EVACUATION OF PLO FORCES IS RUNNING BEHIND SCHEDULE By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- The evacuation of PLO forces from west Beirut continued today for the fourth straight day, but their departure is running behind schedule. During the first three days only 2,192 terrorists left aboard chartered Cypriot ferries. But with the planned departure today of at least 1,000 PLO fighters for South Yemen, the tempo of the evacuation may get back on track.

However, by nightfall, only 570 terrorists had left Beirut. Officials in Beirut said the small number was due to the arrival of only one vessel to transport them, instead of the two expected according to the logistics schedule.

Several score of wounded PLO terrorists were scheduled to leave today aboard the German vessel *Flora*, hired by the International Red Cross as a mercy ship. It was this vessel which earlier this month was hit and damaged by rockets fired by PLO terrorists in west Beirut while it was docked in the Junieh harbor some seven miles north of Beirut.

Tensions And Clashes

Meanwhile, Lebanese army forces today closed the crossing points between east and west Beirut at the Galerie Sema and the National Museum. No official reason was given for this action. However, some observers said crossings between the two sectors of the city may be halted temporarily because of the tension between the two areas following the election yesterday of the rightist Christian militia leader Bashir Gemayel.

Soon after his election, the homes of three Deputies who had participated in the election were blown up. Today, fighting erupted in the hills east of Beirut as leftist gunmen dynamited homes of 12 other Deputies who helped elect Gemayel. The homes are in the predominantly Moslem west Beirut.

The clashes today erupted about 12 miles from Beirut, in the Beirut-Damascus highway. According to local radio reports, Gemayel's Christian militia forces were battling leftist forces. But Israel Radio reported that the fighting was between Christian and Syrian forces. There was also increasing tension in the Bekaa valley where Israel has accused PLO terrorists of attacking its forces from behind Syrian lines. Israel has warned that it will not tolerate these attacks.

Another reason suggested for closing the east-west Beirut crossing points was preparation for the arrival tomorrow or Thursday of 800 American and 650 Italian troops joining the French contingent of the international force supervising the evacuation of the terrorist forces. The newcomers will take over control of the Beirut port area while the French will move to positions further south in the city.

The wild gunfire yesterday in east Beirut, the stronghold of the Maronite Christians, by ecstatic followers of Gemayel following his election, and the shooting celebration by PLO followers and friends as the terrorists were boarding vessels leaving for Cyprus, caused some 50 casualties among civilians hit by ricocheting bullets and shrapnel from rocket grenades, mortar bombs and even anti-aircraft shells.

Meanwhile, Beirut international airport was reopened to traffic. The first plane to land was a light Israeli Air Force plane.

REPORT GEMAYEL AND ISRAEL LEADERS HELD SECRET MEETINGS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Bashir Gemayel, President-elect of Lebanon, held several secret meetings with Israeli leaders recently, including some in Tel Aviv, during Israel's "Peace for Galilee" operation, Maariv reported today. Quoting foreign sources, Maariv said Gemayel met several times with Defense Minister Ariel Sharon.

According to the paper, Gemayel began his series of secret visits to Israel in 1976. He met with various Israeli personalities, including Labor Party chairman Shimon Peres who at the time was Defense Minister in the government of Yitzhak Rabin. In 1976, when Peres launched the "good fence" policy along the border with Lebanon and extended Israeli aid to the Phalangist forces in Lebanon, Gemayel visited Peres at his home in Tel Aviv.

According to another report, as yet unfirmed, the Israelis early in July arranged a meeting between Gemayel and Maj. Saad Hadad, the leader of the Israeli-backed Christian militia. That report said the two Christian leaders arrived at an understanding regarding spheres of influence in Lebanon which is now controlled by the Israel Defense Force.

This meeting, too, was unpublicized. As a rule, Gemayel carefully kept his distance from the Israelis during the war in Lebanon and declined to provide the IDF with any political or military assistance. The Israelis reportedly expected Gemayel to employ his Phalangist forces to complete the drive that IDF had begun in Lebanon to oust the PLO terrorists. But Gemayel left that task for the IDF.

Prospects Of A Peace Treaty

With Gemayel's election yesterday to the Presidency, Israel would like him to sign a peace treaty, but so far no Israeli leader has said so publicly. Gemayel reportedly told an Israeli personality a few days ago in Beirut that he intends to sign "a peace treaty with Israel within six or seven months." But in public announcements, including the one he made yesterday following his election, Gemayel said the new government would have to decide on signing a peace treaty.

According to Maariv, Gemayel asked the Israeli personality not to rush things and push him into an early peace treaty. Gemayel reportedly expected the personality to understand the difficulties he was facing with rival factions and communities in Lebanon and with neighboring Syria which opposed his candidacy and election.

Sources in Jerusalem expressed satisfaction with Gemayel's election, but would not go beyond the very general statements issued yesterday by Premier Menachem Begin and the Foreign Ministry wishing him success in his efforts to re-establish Lebanese sovereignty and independence precisely because of the problems the President-elect is facing.

Mideast experts in Israel noted that Gemayel's election portended a significant change in the life of Lebanon, with prospects for a strong and stable central government. Gemayel, the expert pointed out, won by a majority vote in Parliament despite death threats and terror against Deputies voting for him.

They noted as well that even the U.S., which was skeptical of Gemayel's chances, is now expressing satisfaction at his election. Within hours of Gemayel's election, President Reagan sent him a congratulatory message and the White House said the U.S. would "work closely with the new government in the complex and difficult task ahead."

The acts of violence which followed Gemayel's election -- the houses of 15 Deputies who had participated in the election were blown up by leftists -- indicated that internal strife and factional rivalry could heat up into another civil war. Various elements in the country -- Shiite and Sunni Moslems, leftwing groups, segments of the Christian community -- are not ready to accept a Maronite Christian leader of the rightwing Phalangist Party and a man who is considered a "collaborator" with Israel as the President of their country.

U.S. TROOPS MIGHT ENTER WEST BEIRUT LATER THIS WEEK

By Helen Silver.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- The State Department said today that the present situation in west Beirut appeared favorable for U.S. troops to enter the Lebanese capital later this week as part of the multinational force to oversee the evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"The process of departure seems to be moving forward quite well," Department spokesman John Hughes said. "The fourth ship has either left or is about to leave today, and despite one or two operational 'glitches' that took place over the weekend, that is going well."

Glitches was the phrase used by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger on Sunday to describe the Israeli blockade of a Cyprus-bound vessel from departing the port of Beirut because the PLO had taken aboard jeeps and other military arms that Israel claimed was in contravention of the evacuation agreement.

Hughes said that a decision on the exact movement of U.S. troops into Beirut could be taken in the next 48 hours and that troops would move in "very rapidly" after such a decision is made. If fighting is taking place in other parts of Lebanon, as has been reported, Hughes said U.S. troops would not expand their role, which he noted "is a limited one in Beirut itself."

President Reagan, in a letter to United Nations Secretary General Javier Peres de Cuellar, has pledged that U.S. troops in Beirut will work closely with the UN observers there. "The force will plan to work closely with the United Nations observers group stationed in the Beirut area," Reagan said in a letter to the UN official made public today. "The agreement will support the objective of helping to restore the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon."

Meanwhile, the Israel Embassy confirmed to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that Defense Minister Ariel Sharon will arrive here Friday to address the International Israel Bond Leadership Conference to be held at the Washington Hilton August 26-29.

So far no official visits with Reagan Administration officials have been scheduled for Sharon. But the State Department said that Secretary of State George Shultz would "be happy to see Mr. Sharon" if he does come to U.S. A report in Newsweek magazine last week said that Sharon had indicated that he wanted to come to the U.S. to confer with Administration officials about the situation in Lebanon, but that he had been refused an invitation. The State Department said last week the reports about a "frosty" reaction to the possibility of a Sharon visit here were "not accurate."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE JEWS OF LEBANON

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- A group of well dressed men, women and children sat on the terrace of a coffee house in Rosh Hanikra, Israel's border point with Lebanon, enjoying the view of the coastal plain stretching all the way to the gulf of Haifa.

The group, which seemed like typical tourists who visit the scenic border town, chatted in a mixture of Arabic and French, and occasionally in Hebrew. They were indeed tourists, but hardly typical. They came from the north, from Lebanon. Speaking in Arabic and French marked them as Lebanese nationals. But their usage of Hebrew indicated that they were members of the small Jewish community of Lebanon, a miniscule almost non-existent community.

No one knows exactly how many Jews presently reside in Lebanon, after the long and bloody civil war and after the "Peace for Galilee" operation, both of which have left the country in chaos. There are various estimates, but all agree that there are more than several dozen Jews in the entire country, with only six Jewish families remaining in west Beirut. Several other families are believed to reside in east Beirut.

The group sitting on the coffee house terrace in Rosh Hanikra seemed to constitute the bulk of Lebanese Jewry. The group's members were quite tight-lipped about their lives and the lives of other Jews in Lebanon. They said they came to see Israel, visit relatives and then go back home. They said their life in Lebanon was good, business was good and they would do a lot of thinking before they would decide to immigrate to Israel.

A Steady Decline

Forty years ago there were some 9,000 Jews in Lebanon. About 2,000 Jews emigrated after World War II. The numbers of Jews between the end of the war and now fluctuated, growing for a while as refugees from Syria and Iraq came to Lebanon, and declining again as some of the wealthier Jews left. By 1975, when the civil war broke out, there were between 2,000 and 4,000 Jews in the country.

The civil war caused another sizeable segment of the Jewish community to emigrate, leaving the community without a rabbi and a ritual slaughterer. A rabbi often had to be brought in from Italy or Syria, as was a ritual slaughterer. By the end of the civil war in 1976, only some 2000 Jews were left in the country. It was often difficult to hold a minyan. The few remaining Jews who still live in west Beirut are mostly old, poor and sick. The wealthy and the young live in east Beirut.

Relations With Moslems And Christians

The paradox of the Jewish condition in Lebanon is that in spite of all the hardships the country has suffered, the Jews reportedly suffered little because of their Jewishness, and relations with both Moslems and Christians were reportedly good.

At the height of the civil war in Lebanon, the Jews of Beirut took shelter in the Magen Avraham Synagogue. The neighborhood in which the synagogue was located was the scene of fierce battles between the PLO and the Phalangists. The rabbi telephoned Premier Rashid Karame to ask for help, which he promised to send. But before government troops arrived, PLO leader Yasir Arafat took the opportunity to make a humanitarian gesture by sending his men with food for the Jews trapped in-

side the synagogue and to make certain that they were not harmed. However, as the situation in Beirut during the civil war became unbearable many Jews fled to the mountains in the east. When they returned during a period of relative calm, they found that most of their property had been plundered. Emigration continued after the civil war, with Jews leaving for the United States, Latin America, France and Israel. The Lebanese authorities never prevented them from leaving.

Some Of The Synagogues Remaining

The Magen Avraham Synagogue is located on Wadi Abu Jamil Street, once the center of the Jewish quarter in Beirut, now a predominantly Moslem Shiite area. The street is close to the city's commercial center, near the "Green Line" dividing east and west Beirut, and the scene of frequent exchanges of fire between the PLO and Christian forces. The synagogue was built in 1926, financed by Indian Jews. It is a cream and ochre-colored building, with Stars of David in its two round windows. At the beginning of August, an Israeli shell hit the roof of the synagogue during the heavy bombardment of the city, according to foreign press reports. There are reportedly plans to repair the damage, but it might take quite a while to do so.

There are other synagogues in Bhamdoun, on the Beirut-Damascus highway, and in Sidon. The one in Bhamdoun is described as an exceptionally beautiful synagogue. The terrorists reportedly used it as a fortified position. They ripped up prayer books and prayer shawls. The Torah scrolls had been removed earlier when the Jewish community left the town several years ago.

Jewish Communities Disappearing

Until 1948, some 200 Jews lived in the southern town of Sidon. Then, as Palestinians fled to the area from Israel, most of the local Jewish population either left the country, took to the hills or moved north to Beirut. When Israeli forces captured the town during the "Peace for Galilee" operation, they found one Jewish family, Jamila Levy, a 52-year-old widow, and her four grown children, living in a spacious apartment overlooking the port of Sidon.

Jewish communities are also disappearing in other parts of Lebanon. There are reportedly very few Jews left, if any, in Tripoli, in northern Lebanon, presently under Syrian control. A Talmudic center was established in Tyre, south of Sidon, nearly 2,000 years ago. But so far as can be established, no Jews are now residing there.

There was a strong Jewish community in the predominantly Druze town of Hasbaya, north of the Israeli town of Metulla. However, most of the Jewish residents moved to the Galilee settlement of Rosh Pina when it was founded at the turn of the century, and by the end of World War I all the Jews had left Hasbaya.

Some 80 Jewish families lived in the Druze-Christian town of Deir el-Kamar on the Shouf mountains at the beginning of the 1800's. They left in the 1860's when the Druze-Christian conflict reached its peak. An old synagogue remains in the town.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Israel Tuesday allowed the Egyptian ship, Lotus, which was anchored in the Beirut harbor, to unload some 2,000 tons of food and medical supplies. The ship, which arrived a few days ago, was not permitted to unload its contents because several leaders of parties in Egypt opposed to Israel were aboard and planned to go ashore to demonstrate against Israel's military actions in Lebanon. Israeli officials decided to allow the unloading in order to get the medical supplies distributed.