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U.S. STARTS 'HIGH LEVEL' TALKS WITH ISRAEL TO PREVENT FURTHER IDF-U.S. MARINE CLASHES IN LEBANON

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 17 (JTA) — The Reagan Administration said today that the United States has started "high level" talks with Israel to prevent a continuation of clashes between Israeli forces and U.S. marines in the Beirut area.

But the Israel Embassy here said the incidents would not occur if there was a "direct liaison" between the Israel Defense Force and the U.S. marines as there was between the IDF and the other contingents of the multinational force (MNF) in Beirut, consisting of French, British and Italian units.

The Administration and the Embassy were referring to charges by Gen. Robert Barrow, Commandant of the Marine Corps, that Israeli troops are deliberately threatening the lives of American military personnel in Lebanon for "political purposes."

U.S. General Urges 'Strong Action'

The charges were contained in a classified letter from Barrow to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger in which Barrow urged that "firm and strong action" must be taken by the U.S. to end the confrontations. The letter was released to the press today after it was obtained yesterday by the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain. There was no immediate comment from Jerusalem.

The Pentagon said today that it had no comment on Barrow's charges because "the letter speaks for itself." State Department spokesman John Hughes said he did not know the details of the recent clashes but that the issue has been raised with Israel and that both Israel and the U.S. are "concerned" and want to take steps to resolve the problem.

Statements By Israel Embassy

The Israel Embassy issued a statement stressing that "Israel views itself as an ally of the U.S." and "wishes to have the fullest cooperation" with the marine contingent in the Beirut area. The statement said: "Israel has repeatedly expressed the desire for a liaison with the U.S. marines."

"We have such a liaison with the French, British and Italian MNF and we have had no incidents whatsoever... Regrettably, the U.S. decided not to permit a similar direct liaison between the IDF and the marines and this has resulted in numerous misunderstandings and incidents concerning the demarcation of responsibilities."

The Embassy statement noted that "furthermore and most disturbingly, the U.S. issued instructions to the marines 'not to fraternize' with the IDF." The statement concluded by declaring that "Israel shares with the U.S. a strong desire for peaceful conditions in Lebanon and therefore it fervently hopes that the U.S. lifts its restrictions on direct liaison in order to avoid further misunderstandings between the IDF and the U.S. marines."

Barrow, in his letter to Weinberger, cited repeated incidents in recent months in which he said American officers were threatened by Israeli

forces. He said on January 31, an Israeli tank opened fire with a 50 calibre machinegun directly in front of an American patrol, forcing it to turn around.

In another incident, according to the letter and classified documents accompanying it, a marine Major was threatened on three separate occasions by Israeli soldiers and Israelis in civilian clothes who pointed guns at him.

Barrow said two incidents over the last weekend had prompted his letter. But there was apparently no connection between those incidents and the attacks this week by unknown assailants which wounded five marines and 11 Italian soldiers in the Beirut area.

The incidents reported by Barrow were undisclosed at the time they occurred. But a highly publicized confrontation occurred last February 2 when a marine Captain brandished his pistol to turn away three Israeli tanks which allegedly attempted to break through marine lines on the outskirts of Beirut. The Israelis contended at the time that the tanks were patrolling in an Israel-held area and that the marine officer had overreacted.

Barrow stated in his letter, "It is evident to me that the incidents between the marines and the IDF are timed, orchestrated and executed for obtuse Israeli political purposes." He did not elaborate.

FOCUS ON ISSUES JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS DENOUNCE REAGAN'S USE OF SCRIPTURE AND JESUS TO OPPOSE A NUCLEAR FREEZE

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, March 17 (JTA) — President Reagan's recent assertion that belief in God should make Americans solidly back his opposition to a nuclear freeze and support his program for a massive military buildup came under stinging denunciation from leaders of the three branches of Judaism.

The Jewish religious leaders, in response to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency survey, said that the use by the President of moral absolutes "in the name of Jesus" was morally offensive and possibly a violation of his constitutional obligations; that castigation of the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil" might unwittingly bring about the "catastrophe" of a nuclear holocaust; that it implied an attempt to silence opposition to the President's policies, including his strong support of prayer in the public schools; and threatened the nation's religious pluralism.

Cites Violation Of Constitutional Obligation

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the association of Reform synagogues, said that "the invoking of moral absolutes in the name of Jesus" were "offensive when they are voiced by the President of the United States." He added that they were "in fact, a violation of his constitutional obligation to be President of all Americans, regardless of religious persuasion."

Schindler added that "all religious people will find the invocation of the divine as favoring a political point of view as distasteful, if not blasphemous." He declared that this also "injuries the democratic process, for it forecloses genuine political debate by labelling all dissenters as sinners and followers of Satan."

The President made his remarks in a speech on March 7 in Orlando to the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization of conservative churches and agencies.

The President told the Orlando gathering that "there is sin and evil in the world and we are enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might." He said Soviet Communism "is the focus of evil in the modern world" and that those favoring a mutual freeze on nuclear weapons were ignoring "the aggressive instincts of an evil empire."

Leaders of Christian church organizations were similarly critical of the President's resort to theological concepts in his appeals for support of his policies and in his criticisms of foes of those policies.

'Radical Evil of Nuclear War'

Rabbi Herman Schaalman, outgoing president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the umbrella agency of American Reform Rabbis, and Rabbi Joseph Glaser, CCAR executive vice president, declared they joined with Protestant and Catholic leaders in "raising our voices against the radical evil of nuclear war." They said "we deplore tendencies to articulate the relationship between the United States and the USSR in terms of irreconcilable evil and good, and Satan and God."

Schaalman and Glaser pledged to "continue to raise our voices and make efforts to change" the "noxious" policies and actions of the Soviet Union. But they declared that "no good is served by distorting our vision of the Soviet Union in apocalyptic theological terms." The two rabbis warned that "merely to speak in terms of ultimate confrontation will freeze us in a posture of irresponsibility whose only outcome will be the ultimate war."

They urged the President, in negotiations with the Soviet Union, to make certain that "his words and deeds will be in the true spirit of our shared religious commitment to the unrelenting pursuit of peace."

'We Will Not Be Silenced'

Rabbi Arnold Goodman, president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis, said the nuclear freeze issue stemmed from "a deep concern that the world may be heading for a holocaust of its own making," and that the Jewish tradition, "with its concern for life, obviously has a contribution to make to the overall deliberations" on that overriding issue. Goodman asserted "we will not be silenced and we will join with our fellow clergy here and throughout the free world in continuing to sensitize our society and our political leaders to moral concerns."

He said he agreed with the President that all Americans must oppose "sin and evil" in the world, a duty "mandated by our Torah and our teachings." But he declared he found it "regrettable" that the President, "who represents all the people," had chosen to "limit his sources of inspiration" for his call to battle sin and evil "to Christian doctrine."

Note Serious Abuse of Religion

Marshall Wolke, president of the United Synagogue of America, the central agency for Conservative congregations, and Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman, executive vice president, condemned the President for asserting that his opposition to a nuclear freeze "was based on a true interpretation of Christianity" and for his attack on "the liberal religious community, Christian and Jewish, who differed with his

point of view on the nuclear proliferation treaties and procedures." They said "the assumption of authority for the only authentic interpretation of the religious message," which they described as historically "one of the most serious abuses of religion," was an abuse "that strikes at the heart of religious pluralism on which our nation was founded."

Wolke and Kreitman declared that the President "had no right to intrude his religious point of view into a discussion of a politically sensitive matter, nor to usurp for himself divine approval of that point of view." They said that, as President of all the people "and of all religious points of view," President Reagan "must respect the authenticity of that diversity."

Concerned Over Use Of Religious Content

Julius Berman, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, said that "while we also recognize the evils represented by the actions of the Soviet Union, we are very concerned when any government official, including the President, expresses that opposition purely in religious terms, especially when they are not shared by everyone in our pluralistic society."

The Orthodox lay leader also expressed concern over the suggestion by Reagan "that opposition to the introduction of prayer in our public schools springs from an anti-religious attitude. While we strongly believe that religion should play a predominant role in each individual's life, we also maintain our opposition to prayer in the public schools, because it violates the doctrine of separation of church and state, which is the rock upon which this pluralistic republic was established."

Warns Of Possible Polarization

Rabbi Gilbert Klaperman, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, a major Orthodox rabbinical association, declared it was "wrong and dangerous" for Reagan "to inject an affirmative sectarian note into a political issue that does not take into account our pluralistic society," a statement Klaperman warned "may polarize different religious elements in America."

To the President's comment suggesting that all Christians who do support a nuclear freeze "are not loyal Christians," Klaperman retorted that "there are many devout Christians who are deeply committed to a nuclear freeze" and that the President, in impugning their Christian loyalty, "is superimposing dogmatic principles on a political issue."

Citing the church-state separation principle as basic to the American pluralistic society, the Orthodox rabbinical leader said "those who do not agree with the policy of their nation should not be attacked on religious grounds."

Criticizes Attempt To Stigmatize

Rabbi Walter Wurzbarger, president of the Synagogue Council of America, declared that the President "has every right to oppose a nuclear freeze but he has no right to stigmatize those who disagree with his brand of 'civil religion' as having succumbed to 'the temptation of pride' and as seeking not the reality but 'the illusion of peace.'"

He called "equally distressing" the President's attempt to preach "civil religion" by advocating an amendment to permit prayer in public schools. He asserted that "non-denominational" prayer would be an exercise in "religious tokenism" rather than a genuine contribution towards the enhancement of religious values."

ISRAEL TAKING SERIOUSLY A REPORTED WARNING BY THE USSR

JERUSALEM, March 17 (JTA) -- Israeli officials are taking seriously a reported warning by the Soviet Ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Soldatov, last night that "if war breaks out between Syria and Israel, the USSR will interfere."

The statement was attributed to Soldatov by the Voice of Lebanon, the Christian Phalangist radio in Beirut. No other media carried it. Israeli sources said this was the first time a senior Soviet official made a clear statement of the role the Soviet Union would play in any future Middle East war.

The sources accused the Soviets of trying to create an atmosphere of panic in the region but repeated earlier Israeli declarations that Israel had no intention of attacking Syria and thereby playing into Moscow's hands.

An Israeli spokesman said, nevertheless, that Israel expected the U.S. to meet the Soviet challenge which was a clear signal to both Israel and the U.S. of official Russian involvement in Syria and Lebanon. According to the spokesman, the Americans should be as concerned as Israel.

U.S. GIVES ISRAEL PROPOSALS FOR SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 17 (JTA) -- Detailed American proposals for security arrangements in south Lebanon are expected to be discussed by the Cabinet when it meets for its regular weekly session this Sunday. The proposals were conveyed to Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir today by U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis. Shamir reportedly took them up immediately with Premier Menachem Begin.

The details are said to fit the general outline of ideas discussed by Shamir and Secretary of State George Shultz in Washington this week and are limited to security arrangements. The issues of normalization and future relations between Israel and Lebanon will continue to be discussed when the Israeli, Lebanese and American negotiating teams resume regular tripartite talks next week.

Funeral Services For Two Israel Soldiers

These developments unfolded against the background of mounting violence in Lebanon aimed against the Israel army and the multinational force in the greater Beirut area. Funeral services were held today for Maj. Shimon Mandil, 26, from Rishon Le-Zion, and Capt. Shlomo Weitzman, 35, from Yehuda who were killed yesterday when their jeep struck a mine near Kahhale village about three miles east of Beirut. Nine Israeli soldiers were wounded Sunday in separate ambush attacks in south Lebanon.

Yesterday, five U.S. marines and nine Italian soldiers, part of the MNF, were wounded in grenade attacks in the Beirut airport area. Two more Italian soldiers were wounded today. A Dutch soldier serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was stabbed today in the south Lebanese village of Haris when a Dutch patrol tried to search three local residents. The three men were turned over to the Lebanese police.

At The World Conference On Soviet Jewry: SOVIET UNION CALLED ON TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENT TO HELSINKI FINAL ACT

By Cindy Kaye

JERUSALEM, March 17 (JTA) -- The third World Conference on Soviet Jewry called on the Soviet Union today to honor its commitment to the

Helsinki Final Act and "reopen the gates and permit the departure of Soviet Jews, allow their repatriation to Israel, the national homeland of the Jewish people..." The resolution also called for the immediate release of "the Prisoners of Zion," an end to the persecution of Jews who wish to practice their faith and an "end to the government-sponsored campaign that is fanning the flames of anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jewish people" in the USSR.

Another resolution adopted by the 3,000 delegates from 31 countries attending the conference was addressed to Soviet Jews. "We take upon ourselves a personal vow that your struggle is our struggle, that we are at one with you in your dreams and aspirations. In this struggle we are joined by men and women of many creeds and races and nationalities who cherish human dignity..."

Report Leading Refusenik Arrested

The resolutions were adopted as the conference received further reports of the alarming deterioration of the situation of Soviet Jews. According to information reaching here, Yuri Tamopolsky, a leading refusenik, was arrested by the KGB this week in Kharkov. Tamopolsky, 48, a chemist by profession, was refused an exit visa in 1979. He began a hunger strike on October 1, 1982 which he continued until November 9. He is married and the father of a daughter.

Conference sources said his arrest was timed deliberately to dishearten the conference delegates and the hopes of Soviet Jews who may be looking to the conference to bring about an alleviation of their condition.

Other reports to the conference by Soviet Jewish emigres living in Israel and delegates who recently visited the Soviet Union spoke of worsening conditions, increased surveillance of Jews, particularly refuseniks, wider dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda, increased harassment and overt anti-Semitism by ordinary Russians who shout "Kill the Jews and Save Palestine."

Begin: Awakening of Soviet Jewry Is 'Irrepressible'

In a brief speech at the closing session of the conference tonight, Premier Menachem Begin said the awakening of Soviet Jewry is "irrepressible." He added: "We here in Israel will never give up hope that they will come home to Zion."

Begin quoted "a reliable source" as saying that a high Soviet official had told him, "Now that the West does not take an interest (regarding Soviet Jews), we can do what we wish." The "great importance" of the Jerusalem conference, Begin said, was to demonstrate that "the free world does care."

PARIS (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson told a Jewish delegation Thursday that he was "adamantly opposed" to holding an United Nations-sponsored conference on Palestine in Paris but there was little he could do to prevent it. Cheysson, according to Jean Kahn who led a delegation of the Strasbourg Jewish community, said France was not consulted when the General Assembly decided last summer to hold the meeting at UNESCO in Paris. He said the French UN delegate abstained when the vote was held. The UN conference on Palestine will open August 16 and last 11 days. PLO chairman Yasir Arafat is expected to attend. Kahn said Cheysson agreed that the conference could spark a new wave of anti-Semitism and said the French government would do all it can to have the meeting cancelled or, at least, transferred to another city.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES A DESERT THAT BLOOMED

By Hugh Orgel

EILAT, March 17 (JTA) -- Farmers on kibbutzim in the Arava Rift valley north of Eilat tell visitors this month they have come at the right time. They say the countryside is more colorful than usual, following a bumper one inch of rain this winter.

But to the 200 delegates from the Jewish National Fund of America, touring the area during their first-ever national assembly held in Israel, the countryside looked dry and forbidding.

Only a close near-ground level examination disclosed on the soil of dry riverbeds, marked by a line of stunted acacia trees, a carpet of inch-high brilliant desert flowers. And then, as the five-bus convoy rounded a bend on the road and skirted a low hill, a remarkable sight came into view -- a field of brilliant green, bordered by lines of tall eucalyptus trees.

These were the fields of Kibbutz Yotvata, established in 1951 and the first of the settlements in the barren Arava, then regarded as a crazy venture in an unfarmable region.

Today Yotvata, 20 miles north of Eilat, and a string of other kibbutzim in the Arava, operates a dairy marketing its products, especially a wide variety of yoghurts, throughout the country as well as growing early-ripening and out-of-season vegetables for sale to Israel and Europe.

Combinations Of Funds, Scientific Approach

The JNF visitors were thrilled to hear that this success represented the JNF in action-- the result of the funds they have been raising in the U.S. for land reclamation and afforestation work.

The desert-become-garden transformation has come about through the combination of funds raised abroad and the scientific approach of Israeli soil and agricultural engineers. Israel's success in the development of computer-controlled irrigation has become world known and is today used in many arid and semi-arid regions of the globe.

But in this hot and dry area, where rainfall is almost nil, where flash floods turn dry riverbeds into raging torrents for very short periods, with rainwater rushing down from far-away mountains and where a strong and steady burning wind blows from north to south day and night, the usual forms of irrigation are virtually useless, and may even be harmful.

The customary drops from revolving overhead distributors tend to evaporate before they reach the plants, and the moisture on the leaves rots them. Furthermore, the salt in the soil in this highly saline area clogs around the roots if the moisture comes from too high.

'The Monster'

And so, Israeli scientists have developed what the kibbutznikim call "the monster," a 200-foot wide contraption of girders looking like the wing structure of a jumbo jet, mounted on a central set of wheels carrying a giant drum with a thick rubber pipe wound on it. From the girders hang a series of thin pipes, dragging on the ground between the furrows.

The central computer receives information from sensors about the air and soil temperature, moisture content, wind strength and direction. The correct amount of water then flows through the main pipe and into the individual small pipes, directly to the root of the plant. This system helps leach out the

salt from the immediate root area, forcing it into the ridge between the furrows. It was in such a field, green with fresh onions, that the JNF leaders heard of the scientific progress as they enjoyed the tomatoes, green, red and yellow peppers, and dates grown in similar fields in other parts of the kibbutz.

All the fields are ringed by JNF-planted eucalyptus trees which form wind breakers to modify the fierce winds and reduce the amount of sand and dust which would otherwise smother the vegetation.

Preparing 17,000 Acres Of Land

But JNF work in this southern region of Israel is not confined only to farming. Work is under way to prepare some 17,000 acres of land around the area known as King Solomon's mines -- the site of ancient 3,000-year-old Egyptian and modern Israeli copper mines -- as a national park.

Other parks are being prepared throughout Israel, with the JNF assisting in the construction of recreation areas with picnic and rest room facilities.

NEW PARTY FORMED IN ISRAEL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 17 (JTA) -- A new rightwing religious Zionist political party was officially formed in Tel Aviv last night by Rabbi Haim Druckman, a National Religious Party Knesset member who is expected to quit the NRP and declare himself an independent faction.

The new party which calls itself "Matzad" (Mahane Zioni Dati--Religious Zionist Camp) is far to the right of the NRP and will probably call for the immediate annexation of the West Bank in repudiation of the Camp David accords.

Druckman is said to be trying to recruit Hanan Porat away from the ultra-nationalist Tehiya party which is part of the Likud-led coalition. Porat is also a religious Jew. Druckman maintained last night that the Religious Zionist Camp speaks for tens of thousands of persons who are not given full expression in the NRP. He indicated that his constituency was among Orthodox youths who did their military service at yeshivas on the West Bank and alumni of Bnei Akiva, the Orthodox youth movement.

Interior Minister Yosef Burg, a veteran NRP leader, dismissed Druckman's claims as "bombast" and said he represented only a marginal element within the NRP and the national religious community. Burg said the NRP demonstrated its influence this week when the two candidates it backed for Ashkenazic and Sephardic Chief Rabbis handily won election.

But sources close to Druckman claimed that the newly elected Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, Avraham Shapira, was in fact a Matzad sympathizer and had refused to speak out against the new movement although he was pressured by the NRP to do so.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Mendel Kaplan of Johannesburg was unanimously named chairman-elect of the World Board of Trustees of the United Israel Appeal-Keren Hayesod at its recent meeting in Jerusalem. Kaplan, who will assume office in June, will succeed Philip Granovsky of Toronto, who has served in this post since the establishment of the board five years ago. The UIA-Keren Hayesod World Board of Trustees is composed of heads of Keren Hayesod campaigns throughout the world, and Israeli representatives, primarily members of the World Zionist Organization Executive. In his new capacity, Kaplan will travel on behalf of Keren Hayesod to various countries in which the campaigns are conducted.