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SYRIANS REINFORCING THEIR POSITIONS IN THE BEKAA VALLEY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- The Syrians are reinforcing their positions in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon and are apparently preparing to remain there for a long time, according to Brig. Gen. Yehuda Cohen, commander of the Israel Defense Force Engineering Corps.

He told military correspondents today that hundreds of tank positions have been prepared in the valley and extensive minefields have been laid there, facing the IDF positions.

Cohen disclosed that his men have begun to move some of their equipment from the present Israeli front line in Lebanon. He stressed, however, that this removal did not endanger the IDF positions and that the efficiency and safety of Israeli soldiers would not be affected even if the government ordered the IDF to remain in its present position, postponing its redeployment for any reason until after the winter.

GHALI JUSTIFIES SYRIAN INTRANSIGENCE

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Syria's refusal to withdraw its forces from the Bekaa valley was justified by Egyptian Minister of State Boutros Ghali. He told Arab journalists here last night, after his arrival in Paris, that Syria's stand "is justified and natural" because Damascus "is worried by Israel's intentions." He added that "one should not forget that Israeli troops still occupy the Golan."

Ghali's declaration, printed today in several Arab-language dailies, might indicate a change in Egyptian-Syrian relations. Cairo and Damascus broke off diplomatic relations in 1979 after the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and the two countries' state radios and televisions have been generally trading accusations and insults.

Damascus Radio, monitored in Paris today, warmly praised, for the first time, Egypt's stand and thanked President Hosni Mubarak for his support. The radio bitterly attacked the new American mediator, Robert McFarlane, saying his trip to the Middle East "serves to help the pro-American regimes and the Phalangist interests" in Lebanon. Damascus Radio indicated that McFarlane might not be welcomed once again in Syria unless he "brings with him new ideas."

McFarlane, President Reagan's special envoy to the Mideast, met with Syrian President Hafez Assad last Sunday. The Syrian leader said his country continues to reject the Israel-Lebanon agreement and that Syria would not consider withdrawing its troops from Lebanon before Israeli troops fully withdraw.

DRUZE SHELL BEIRUT AIRPORT

TEL AVIV, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Beirut International Airport was closed today after some 40 rockets and shells slammed into the runway and terminal building areas and nearby slum district. Four people were reported killed and about 24 injured, including a U.S. marine on duty at the airport at the time.

The barrage was aimed at the airport area from the leftwing Druze positions in the hills east of the city. Israel Defense Force personnel moved into the area

to halt the shelling. Beirut sources said it was hoped the airport would reopen to traffic by tomorrow morning.

TWO MAJOR JEWISH GROUPS SEEK ASSURANCES THAT COMMEMORATION OF 1963 CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH WILL NOT TURN INTO AN ANTI-ISRAEL EVENT

By Rifka Rosenwein

NEW YORK, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Two major Jewish organizations are currently seeking assurances from the leaders of the 20th anniversary celebration of Martin Luther King's historic "I have a dream" speech that the event will not be used as a forum for expression of anti-Israel sentiment.

A number of other Jewish organizations that have traditionally been at the forefront of the civil rights movement have decided not to endorse the August 27 commemorative march in Washington, D.C., because of what they consider to be the anti-Israel position of some of the rally's sponsors. They also object to parts of the rally's platform, which they feel would lead to a distortion of the purpose of the event. The groups object as well to the scheduling of the march for Saturday.

A spokesman for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that his organization was assured by the leadership of the march that "anti-Israel rhetoric will not take place" at the event. If any such rhetoric is expressed, the spokesman continued, the leadership promised to "disavow" it.

The spokesman explained that the UAHC was now "negotiating the (content of the) official position papers" of the event. He added, however, that barring "overt anti-Semitic sentiment," the UAHC is endorsing the march because "we feel the risks involved are not worth pulling out" from the event. He also stressed that the UAHC "is not encouraging" its members to march "because of the conflict with Shabbat." Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the UAHC, is a co-convenor of the event.

The American Jewish Congress is working with the UAHC "to negotiate certain commitments" from the march leadership, an AJCongress spokesman said, but its decision on whether or not to endorse the march will depend on the outcome of these negotiations, the spokesman added.

The leadership includes co-chairpersons Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil rights leader; Dr. Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Dr. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Judy Goldsmith, president of the National Organization for Women; and Rep. Walter Fauntroy (D, District of Columbia), the national director of the event.

The march is being publicized as a "New Coalition of Conscience" that will boast a platform of "jobs, peace and freedom."

The JTA contacted the offices of Hooks in New York, Fauntroy in Washington and Mrs. King in Atlanta, but was told that they were unavailable for immediate comment. A spokesman for the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change in Atlanta, which Mrs. King heads, read a statement issued ear-

lier by Mrs. King: "I hope the Jewish community and Jewish leaders will support the march. The march, and what it represents, is so much greater than whatever individual differences we may have."

Reasons For Not Endorsing the Event

The Jewish groups that have decided not to endorse the event noted several reasons for their decision. Most cited a specific clause in "A Call to the Nation" issued by the march organizers, which says: "We oppose the militarization of internal conflicts, often abetted and even encouraged by massive U.S. arms exports, in areas of the world such as the Middle East and Central America, while their basic human problems are neglected."

Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said, "In view of Israel being a recipient of some of these 'massive arms,' the message is clear; we do not belong in this march."

He added that "by bringing in a number of political issues" to the rally's platform "not directly related to civil rights," the event was being "diluted" and "politicized." Perlmutter said he saw "absolutely no purpose (in joining) in an event that has so broadened its agenda, even reaching so far as the Middle East. They are working far afield."

Donald Feldstein, executive vice president of the American Jewish Committee, said that the "call for a New Coalition of Conscience" consists of a hodgepodge of controversial national and international issues quite unrelated to the central civil rights goals that unite most Americans of good will."

He explained that "the AJCommittee and most other Jewish groups have no official position on many of these issues; but there is evidence of considerable pressure to have the march endorse extreme positions on many of them -- including, it is feared, implied condemnation of Israel and support for the PLO."

A spokesman for the American Section of the World Zionist Organization, which is also not endorsing the march, cited nuclear disarmament and Central America as issues which have "no connection with the civil rights objectives which we share."

The Jewish War Veterans, who originally endorsed the march, withdrew its sponsorship in June because of the issues "unrelated to civil rights" that it felt "distort the original purposes" of the event, according to a spokesman.

Objection To Some Of The Sponsors

The JWV and the other groups also objected to certain sponsors of the march who have been associated with anti-Semitic or anti-Israel statements. Those most often mentioned were Rev. Jesse Jackson and former Senator James Abourezk, who is now chairman of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

"I do not wish to literally or figuratively march side by side" with those people, said Perlmutter.

"Too many of those in the line march to the sound of a different drummer that grates on the message of the Reverend King's immortal 'I have a dream' vision," said Bernice Tannenbaum, chairman of the WZO American Section.

A spokesman for the WZO cited a list of several "Communist and pro-PLO" sponsors of the event to whom the Jewish groups object. The groups were identified as the People's School for

Marxist Studies, which has hosted PLO officials in this country; Jewish Affairs, a publication of the Communist Party; the United States Peace Council; Pax-Christi; Women for Racial and Economic Equality; and the National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression. The WZO spokesman also noted that Lowery and Fauntroy have organized pro-PLO conferences and anti-Israel rallies.

Feldstein said this New Coalition could "only undermine" the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, "for decades the most effective coalition of Blacks, Jews, labor and other supporters" of the civil rights agenda.

Besides their opposition to the current agenda and some of the new leaders of the march, the Jewish groups objected to the scheduling of the event for the Sabbath. Feldstein called it "insensitively scheduled" and Tannenbaum agreed that it was "thoughtlessly" planned.

Stress Commitment To Original Civil Rights Aims

At the same time, however, the Jewish leaders stressed their continued commitment to the original civil rights objectives, and many are endorsing other events scheduled for the week of the rally in commemoration of the original march.

A spokesman for the AJCommittee said that his organization was "recommending local events be held to underscore our commitment to complete the unfinished civil rights agenda." The JWV spokesperson said her organization "still endorses the agenda of Martin Luther King and will continue to work" towards his goals.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), which is an umbrella coordinating body, is "taking no position in regard to the march," according to Chamey Bramberg, associate director. "Because there was a division among the members," which include UAHC, the NJCRAC has "no power to take a position," he said. He added that many of its members were planning other forms of commemoration of the historic march.

Other Programs Planned

The Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington is planning a week-long series of programs, including sponsoring a television show about the civil rights movement, showing an ADL film about Martin Luther King, encouraging rabbis to give Sabbath sermons about the issues of civil rights, urging people to plant trees in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Forest in Israel, and sponsoring a discussion about the 1983 congressional legislative agenda as it pertains to the area of civil rights. The events are staged in conjunction with the Washington offices of the ADL and the AJCongress.

The AJCommittee has issued a booklet entitled "The Moral Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr." by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the Committee, as part of its commemoration of the march.

ISRAELI SHEKEL DEVALUED BY 7.5%
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- The Bank of Israel, Israel's central bank, today devalued the Israeli Shekel by 7.5 percent against the dollar, in a new indication that Israel was continuing to lose its battle against the economy's galloping inflation.

The Shekel was being sold today by the Central Bank to commercial banks at 57.13 Shekels to the dollar, as against 53.14 yesterday.

The announcement came as the Ministerial Economic Committee continued its closed door meetings for a third day today in an effort to implement the Fin-

ance Ministry's plan to cut Israel's out-of-balance budget by drastically trimming the funds all government ministries may spend this year.

The committee is trying to formulate specific proposals which are expected to be adopted by the Cabinet on Sunday. Last Sunday the Cabinet failed to act on a proposal by Finance Minister Yoram Aridor that 55 billion Shekels be cut from the government budget, including a hefty 20 billion Shekel cut in the defense budget.

The devaluation today was denounced by Israel's powerful union movement, the Histadrut, and received only a lukewarm welcome from manufacturers who called it "too little and too late." Some exporters said the devaluation would help Israel's urgent need to expand exports if accompanied by other fiscal measures, presumably meaning deep government budget cuts, and possibly reduce imports by increasing their prices.

Yisrael Keissar, deputy secretary-general of the Histadrut, warned that devaluation would not solve all of Israel's economic problems and repeated the Histadrut's opposition to any changes in the present arrangement which links wage hikes to inflation increases. But Eli Hurwitz, head of the Manufacturers Association, called the devaluation "a move in the right direction."

Explanation For the Devaluation

Experts noted that the 7.5 percent devaluation was a sharp jump from the customary unofficial creeping devaluation of the Shekel which, until about two months ago, averaged about five percent a month. In recent weeks, the Central Bank accelerated the rate of devaluation and during the past 10 days, the Shekel lost 10 percent of its purchasing power.

The official explanation for the 7.5 percent devaluation was that the adjustment brought the Shekel closer into line with its "real value." The immediate purpose of the devaluation was described as that of encouraging Israel exports, and making them cheaper on world markets, and discouraging imports, by making them more expensive.

The Central Bank announced today that it would continue to take steps to correct the exchange rate against the powerful American dollar and the basket of world currencies, made up of Western European currencies and the Japanese yen.

But Bank of Israel officials asserted that the latest devaluation was due mainly to international and not to local developments. They noted the American dollar has been at an all-time high relative to several European currencies in recent days.

The continued decline in the value of the French Franc, the Deutschmark, the Italian Lira and the Yen has made exports to those countries increasingly less profitable to Israeli companies, though Western Europe remains a major market for Israeli products.

Devaluation Cannot Cure Ailments

Economic experts agreed that devaluation alone cannot cure the ailments of the Israeli economy and that it could serve as another stimulus to Israel's roaring inflation. These experts said devaluation must be accompanied by other economic measures to neutralize the negative effects of the devaluation. Specifically, the government must slash its budget and take other restraining measures.

Whatever the popular reaction, they said, the government must raise the prices of all subsidized goods and services soon and this time it will have to be more than the five percent jumps Israelis have experienced in recent months.

The experts declared that the prices of all imports will increase in step with the rate of devaluation, as will the prices of domestically-produced items, partly because of the costlier import components of such products, partly because of the inevitable rises in the costs of raw material, energy and, eventually, labor costs.

CHAMOUN MEETS WITH SHAMIR By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) — Danny Chamoun, the son of former pro-Western Lebanese President Camille Chamoun, met here today with Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. During their meeting Chamoun expressed support for the ratification of the Israel-Lebanon agreement, which Lebanon has so far failed to do. He also expressed the hope that the Israeli withdrawal from the Shouf mountain area would be coordinated with the Lebanese government, "so that the dangerous vacuums which could lead to new flare-ups would not develop."

Chamoun, who is also scheduled to meet with Defense Minister Moshe Arens and other Israeli leaders, was invited to come here as tensions between Israel and Lebanon are increasing. He told reporters that he had not come to Israel secretly or by accident. Chamoun said there was no reason to be secretive about his visit because Israel and Lebanon are not enemies. The relationship between the two countries should lead to eventual peace, he said.

Chamoun has spent five years in self-imposed exile following his defeat in his bitter rivalry with Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel during the years of struggle between the Christian armed forces and Chamoun's "Tiger" militia. Gemayel was murdered last September, a few days before he was to assume the presidency. The Phalangists then proceeded to butcher the Tiger militia and have since then dominated the Lebanese forces.

Chamoun's visit to Israel was seen as his bid to return to Lebanese politics. He acknowledged that he would like to be Lebanon's President, following in the footsteps of his father's three-term presidency.

FRAGMENT OF ANCIENT TALMUD IS PUBLISHED IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) — A fragment of Talmudic literature, possibly dating back to the fifth century or even the Talmudic period itself (which began in the third century), has recently been published here. The fragment was discovered in 1980 among the more than 140,000 pieces of Hebrew writings recovered from the Cairo Geniza. A geniza is a traditional Jewish burial place for holy writings.

The significance of the discovery, which was made by Marc Bergman, Lecturer in Rabbinic Literature and coordinator of classical Hebrew studies at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, is that it is one of the only existing manuscripts of Talmudic literature from before the ninth century.

"The fragment demonstrates the way in which this literature, which is the foundation of all later Judaism, was set down in writing," Bergman said. "This fragment is for Talmudic research, what the Dead Sea Scrolls were for Biblical and Second Temple period studies," he added.

SHANGHAI MAY DESIGNATE FORMER SYNAGOGUES AS HISTORIC LANDMARKS, SCHNEIER REPORTS

NEW YORK, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Shanghai, the haven for 25,000 Jews fleeing Nazi Europe during World War II, is expected to designate former synagogues as historic landmarks, it was revealed by Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, on his return from a study mission to China.

Schneier, senior rabbi of Park East Synagogue in Manhattan, told a press conference here today that an interfaith delegation of the Foundation which he led in China had met with Shanghai's Deputy Mayor, Li Zhao Ji, last month.

The Shanghai official responded favorably to the delegation's request that several of the former synagogues be given landmark status, Schneier said. The buildings are now being used for industrial, commercial and educational purposes, he said.

The delegation visited the former Jewish cemetery in Shanghai and Schneier recited Kaddish there. The cemetery was demolished during the cultural revolution in the late 1960's, the delegation was told. The former Jewish chapel is now a tea house and the cemetery has been converted into a park and children's playground.

Schneier said there were no practicing Jews in Shanghai or in China today. Some families such as those with the names Li, Chi, Kao, Zhao, Jin, Zhang and Shi claim descent from the now vanished Jewish community of Kaifeng, site of a Jewish colony established in the 12th century, Schneier noted. However, he added, "none practice Judaism and all of them have been fully absorbed into Chinese society."

Recently, the popular Chinese magazine "Encyclopedic Knowledge" published an article by a young Chinese sociologist, Jin Xiao Jing, who wrote of how she had searched for her Jewish roots.

Signs Of Religious Growth

While Jewish life has disappeared, the Appeal of Conscience leaders reported finding "concrete signs of vigorous religious growth" in the cities they visited -- Peking, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Shanghai. Schneier said the delegation saw "visible evidence" that Catholic and Protestant churches and Buddhist and Taoist temples had been restored since the group's last mission to China in 1981. He said enrollment was rising in religious seminaries and new seminaries were being built.

The delegation also met with Deputy Foreign Minister Han Xu and discussed with him recent developments affecting international relations, Schneier reported. At a formal banquet in Peking given by the Chinese officials, Han said he hoped the visit of the Appeal of Conscience delegation would "promote a continuing line of dialogue and mutual understanding between China and the United States."

In addition to Schneier, the interfaith delegation was composed of the Rev. Donald Campion, secretary of information of the United States Jesuit Conference; Dr. Herbert Anderson, senior minister of the Brick Presbyterian Church in Manhattan; and Francis Dom, a prominent Catholic layman and former Brooklyn Congressman.

N.Y. STATE GOVERNOR SIGNS INTO LAW BILL THAT WOULD LIMIT POWER OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS TO PERFORM AUTOPSIES OVER RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS

ALBANY, N.Y., Aug. 10 (JTA) -- An unprecedented measure, which will substantially limit

the power of medical examiners throughout New York State to perform autopsies over religious objections, an issue of vital concern to observant Jews, was signed into law yesterday by Governor Mario Cuomo.

The measure's principal sponsor, Assemblyman Sheldon Silver, (D. Man.) said, when the bill was adopted earlier this year by the Legislature, that it is the first and only law of its kind in the United States.

The new law provides that, if there is conscientious objection by next of kin or "friend" of the decedent, the medical examiner may not perform an autopsy unless there is "a compelling public necessity," defined as a situation in which an autopsy is "essential to the conduct of a criminal investigation of a homicide" of which the dead person may be a victim; or that "discovery of the cause of death is necessary to meet an immediate and substantial threat to the public health; and that a dissection or autopsy is essential to ascertain the cause of death."

Silver said the new law also provided that even a permissible autopsy cannot be performed without notice to permit "an objecting party to challenge the propriety of the particular dissection."

Silver said the law requires that if a medical examiner contends an autopsy is warranted by a "compelling public necessity" other than investigation of a possible homicide or prevention of disease, a court order must be obtained "on notice of next of kin or friend, or if none is known to them, to such party as the court may direct."

Reversal Of The Prior Process

Silver said this reverses the prior process of those opposing an autopsy having to go to court to halt "clearly objectionable autopsies" but the new law also provides "a mechanism for a court to rule on extraordinary situations."

Asserting that "many needless autopsies" are done in New York State, Silver said the new law, while recognizing certain necessities for valid post mortems, "more rationally defines those areas in which a medical examiner is entitled" to perform an autopsy.

Jewish religious law sets severe limits for permitting dissection of a body. Improper dissection is considered a defilement of the body and a desecration of the good name of the dead person.

ISRAEL BOND LEADERS IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- More than 500 Israel Bond leaders, representing one of the largest groups of Bond campaign participants to come to Israel, opened their nine-day conference yesterday with a solemn ceremony on Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem in commemoration of the soldiers who died in the war in Lebanon.

Rabbi Leon Kronish of Miami Beach, Fla., chairman of the conference, said: "We begin here on Mt. Herzl to express our solidarity with our fallen soldiers and their bereaved families who have made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of Medinat (State) Israel." Wreaths were laid on the graves on behalf of the Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Latin America and Israel.

The main focus of the conference, which ends August 17, will be to celebrate Israel's 35 years of economic development. The Israel Bond leaders from 60 communities around the world will meet with government and industry leaders and with ordinary Israelis for an update on the country's current economic, political and social developments.