

U.S. MARINE WITHDRAWAL SPURS ISRAELI PLANS TO FURTHER REDUCE IDF PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 9 (JTA) — President Reagan's decision to pull the U.S. marines out of Beirut in a phased withdrawal seems to have spurred Israeli plans to further reduce the presence of the Israel Defense Force in south Lebanon.

Although Premier Yitzhak Shamir has said repeatedly that it was too early to consider an IDF redeployment in Lebanon, the feeling has grown in political and military circles that an Israeli pullback from the present lines is imminent.

It was apparent at yesterday's special Cabinet session that most ministers would favor a gradual thinning out of the IDF in south Lebanon. Details of such a plan are expected to be discussed at the Cabinet's regular weekly meeting this Sunday.

Military sources said today that with the marines being withdrawn from Beirut, Israel no longer has any commitment to the U.S. in Lebanon and can begin looking to its own interests and reducing the risk of casualties to Israeli soldiers.

Accord With Gemayel Is Insufficient for Security

The prevailing mood here is that security arrangements in the south can no longer rely on an agreement with the government of President Amin Gemayel in Beirut which, since the resignation of Prime Minister Shafiq Wazzan and his Cabinet, has virtually ceased to exist as a viable entity.

The consensus in Israel is that even if Gemayel remains in office, he would become a puppet in the hands of Syrian-controlled forces in Lebanon and probably would abrogate his May 17, 1983 withdrawal and security agreement with Israel, as the Syrians have demanded.

Several Options Being Considered

Given the new situation, the government is said to be considering several options. One calls for an IDF withdrawal southward along the Lebanese coast, ending the occupation of heavily populated urban centers such as Sidon where the risk of casualties is highest because of the hostility of the local residents.

Once the withdrawal is accomplished, the Israelis believe the situation in the rest of south Lebanon could be stabilized with the help of the late Col. Saad Haddad's militia. The IDF would be deployed in a security zone just north of the Israeli border, a region where the population is less hostile toward Israel.

Another option is the formation of a Druze canton north of the Awali River which could serve as a buffer zone protecting the IDF from hostile elements. The Druze have proven reliable in preventing the infiltration of terrorists from the Shouf mountains into the Israel-occupied zone. In any event, the IDF would reserve the option to act against terrorist centers north of any new line that may be established.

THREE KATYUSHA ROCKETS FIRED FROM LEBANON HIT UPPER GALILEE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 9 (JTA) — Three Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanese territory landed in upper Galilee this afternoon without causing casualties or damage. Israeli Radio reported that one projectile hit Metullah and the others struck its outskirts.

The incident was the eighth of its kind in the 20 months since Israel invaded Lebanon in what was called "Operation Peace for Galilee" aimed at halting terrorist rocket and artillery attacks on Israeli towns from across the Lebanese border. The missiles launched today sent residents of Metullah scurrying for bomb shelters. But they emerged minutes later.

The rockets were of 107 mm. caliber with a range of five miles. Israeli soldiers and units of the late Col. Saad Haddad's militia scoured the countryside to try to find the launching site. The Katyushas are a mobile weapon.

Meanwhile, an Israel army armored personnel carrier sustained damage this morning when it struck a mine south of the Zaharani River in south Lebanon. There were no casualties. Shots were fired at an Israel army patrol five kilometers east of Nabatiya today without causing casualties.

ISRAELI EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SHIITES COMPLICATED BY CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN UNIFIL MEMBERS AND SHIITE MILITIAS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 9 (JTA) — A tense situation has developed in south Lebanon between members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and Shiite militias, complicating Israel's efforts to improve relations with the Shiites.

There has been a series of confrontations between UN troops and Shiite militiamen in the region south of the Awali River. The latest occurred yesterday when Shiites blocked a road to halt a UNIFIL supply convoy manned by Ghanaian soldiers. In the ensuing clash, one militiaman was wounded and three were captured.

Timor Goksell, a spokesman for UNIFIL, has called on Israel to restrain local elements operating in territory occupied and controlled by the Israel Defense Force. Israel has had its own trouble with the Shiites.

Initially they welcomed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June, 1982 because the IDF drove the Palestine Liberation Organization out of south Lebanon. Later, however, strong measures taken against terrorists in the Shiite populated areas led to clashes between Shiites and the IDF.

Israel is now trying to repair its relations with the 400,000 Shiites who comprise the majority of the population in south Lebanon and with the Druze. Those groups had been alienated by Israel's all-out support for the Christian Phalangists who support President Amin Gemayel. Now, with Gemayel's position deteriorating rapidly, the Israelis realize they erred in putting too much confidence in the Phalangists.

SHARON SAYS REAGAN WAS MISLED BY MEMBERS OF HIS OWN ADMINISTRATION

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 9 (JTA) — Former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon charged last night that President Reagan was "misled" about Lebanon by prominent members of his own Administration and some of his top diplomatic aides.

Reagan originally understood fully the Syrian and Soviet threat to Lebanon's freedom, Sharon declared during a half hour television interview. "But he was misled by special envoy Philip Habib, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, Nicholas Veliotes and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis," Veliotes, former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, is presently the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt.

According to Sharon, the present situation in Lebanon could have been prevented "if the Americans had listened to us earlier and if the opposition and part of the news media had not caused us to squander the achievements of the war" in Lebanon.

He said the U.S. should act now to ensure free passage from Beirut along the coastal road to Sidon and the Israel-held area to prevent the collapse of the Christians in Lebanon. The U.S. also should insist on implementation of the May 17, 1983 withdrawal and security agreement between Israel and Lebanon, Sharon said.

Defends War In Lebanon

He ardently defended the war in Lebanon and his role in it. He repeated his proposal for a "full-scale investigation" of the war by the government on condition that the opposition and the media also be investigated for their "anti-government and anti-war stand at the start of and throughout the fighting."

Sharon said he had never evaded responsibility for the war. "I never ran away from my responsibility as a Cabinet member and as Minister of Defense," he said. He suggested that an investigation of the war should include examination of Cabinet minutes, a reference to charges by some of his colleagues that he had often acted on his own without consulting them. Commentators noted that Sharon was safe in making such demands because he knew the government would never agree.

The interview dramatized Sharon's ongoing battle with the media. The hostility between the panel of three interviewers and their guest was almost palpable. Observers said later that "there was no knock-out in last night's fight but Sharon won on points." He "bulldozed" his way past embarrassing questions, made no attempt to convince his critics "but gave full satisfaction to his fervent supporters," observers said.

Sharon addressed students at Bar Ilan University today. He said he still considers himself a candidate for the Premiership and would offer to head the Herut party list in the next Knesset elections and to serve as Prime Minister. He dismissed charges that his views and methods endangered democracy in Israel as "a propaganda of fear put out by the opposition to give legitimacy to opposition plans."

As to the Kahan commission's finding that he bore indirect responsibility for the Shatila and Sabra refugee camps massacre in September, 1982, Sharon's reply was "malicious blood libel." The term "blood libel" was former Premier Menachem Begin's initial response to demands that Israel's role in the massacres be investigated.

SOLOMON SCHONFELD DEAD AT 72

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Feb. 9 (JTA) — Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, a leading Jewish educationalist and one of Anglo-Jewry's most controversial personalities, died here last Sunday at the age of 72. Renowned for his strict Orthodoxy and aversion to Zionism, he single handedly established a chain of Jewish day schools, of which the best known were the Hasmonean grammar schools for boys and girls in London.

He exacted strict observance from his schools' Jewish teachers, although many of the staff were non-Jewish. But despite his controversial policies, such as refusing to recognize Israel Independence Day in his schools, he was widely respected, even among those who rejected his views.

A man of outstanding courage and resource, he was responsible, before and during World War II, for bringing thousands of Jewish children from continental Europe to England where he set up a special reception camp on the east coast. He chartered ships and trains and travelled to the continent himself to rescue whole families from the Nazis and bring them back to Britain.

Schonfeld was one of seven children of Dr. Avigdor Schonfeld and Rachel Sternberg. His most famous brother was the late Sir Andrew Schonfeld, the British economist and one-time director of Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Sacrificed Everything For His Beliefs

Schonfeld was the presiding rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, commonly known as Adath Yisrael. The Adath movement had been started by his father, but when the latter died at the age of 49, Solomon decided to enter the ministry and at the age of 18 left his English high school to study in Europe. He was sent to Hungary, from where his family originated, Lithuania and Germany. He returned to England three years later with a doctorate and a rabbinical diploma.

He took control of his late father's day school movement, but shortly before the war he became the director of an emergency committee for European Jewish relief formed by the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Dr. Joseph Hertz, whose daughter, Judith, was Schonfeld's wife.

Schonfeld retired from the headmastership of the Hasmonean day schools five years ago and spent his remaining years writing Biblical commentaries. A tall commanding figure, he looked more like an autocratic British army colonel than a rabbi. He sacrificed everything for his beliefs and his beloved day school movement and died, as he had lived, close to poverty.

Some 2,000 people followed his funeral cortage yesterday through the Stamford Hill district of north London, the city's main center of ultra-Orthodox Jewry.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Shimon Peres, chairman of the opposition Labor Party, warned Wednesday that an immediate danger exists that Shiite Moslem fundamentalists might seize power in Lebanon and turn that country into a new "confrontation state" with Israel. The present situation in Lebanon is fraught with danger for Israel, Peres said, and the Israel Defense Force must be prepared to cope with it. He said that Israel should withdraw from Lebanon and implement parts of the May 17, 1983 agreement with the Lebanese government which allows the Israel Air Force to conduct overflights of Lebanese territory.

JEW OF CENTRAL AMERICA MEET TO ASSESS THEIR FUTURE IN THE REGION

ANTIGUA, Guatemala, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- A meeting of representatives of Jewish communities from Central America has concluded that the "Nicaraguan process" poses a potential threat to the well-being of Jewish communities in the region. But the communities are not in any immediate danger, the World Jewish Congress reported today.

The 11th convention of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Central America and Panama (FEDECO), the affiliate of the WJC here, concluded its three-day session this week. There were 100 delegates and guest, with representatives from the Jewish communities of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panama, as well as representatives from the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Jewish Agency, HIAS, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The convention took place against the backdrop of the explosive general situation reigning in Central America and the uncertainty regarding the future of the region. Among the Jewish leadership there was the conviction that if the "Nicaraguan process" were to extend to other countries, the possibilities for the survival of the Jewish communities would disappear.

An analysis of the Jewish situation in the region showed two stable and dynamic communities: Panama (5,000-6,000) and Costa Rica (2,000-3,000). In addition, Guatemala (some 1,000 Jews) is a community reduced by emigration but organized and active. El Salvador and Honduras have some 40 Jewish families each.

Not On Edge Of Extinction

Despite the potential dangers arising from the general political situation, the Jews of Central America did not see themselves as being on the eve of a massive exodus or the extinction of their communities.

On the contrary, a great part of the discussions at the FEDECO convention and of the resolutions that were adopted had to do with the internal reinforcement of the communities, the maintenance of Jewish identity and spiritual life, and continuity between the generations. Among other specific subjects, the delegates underlined the need to overcome divisiveness within the communities and to make more of their members active.

Government Ministers Address The Convention

The government of Guatemala was represented at the opening and closing sessions of the convention by two of its ministers.

The Minister of Agriculture, Rodolfo Perdomo, spoke at the opening, praising his country's friendship with Israel. At the closing, Foreign Minister Fernando Andrade Diaz Duran presented a full political overview of his country.

He stressed: the guerrillas in Guatemala are under control and lack popular support; United States policy toward Guatemala is not equitable; friendship and cooperation with Israel; Guatemala opened its doors to Jews who succeeded in leaving Cuba; and Guatemala is ready to receive Jewish immigrants from any part of the world.

At this convention, Pinkas Rubinstein of Costa Rica completed his term as president of FEDECO, and Marcel Ruff of Guatemala was elected as its new president. The convention honored two people

for their contribution to the success of FEDECO's activities; within the region, former FEDECO president Moises Mizrachi of Panama, and outside the region, Manuel Tenenbaum, director of the Latin American Branch of the WJC.

PROBLEM OF INTERMARRIAGE IS A MAJOR CONCERN OF GERMAN JEWRY

By David Kantor

BONN, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- There are only about 33,000 Jews living in all of West Germany and West Berlin and a large proportion of them are elderly. But the problem of intermarriage has become a major concern of the Jewish community, according to the Juedischer Pressedienst, a publication of the Central Council of Jews in West Germany.

The issue has been discussed by the Council and at a recent seminar for youths in Stuttgart which drew about 120 participants. According to official statistics, two-thirds of the Jews in Germany who married last year were wed to a non-Jewish spouse.

Most of the participants at the seminar said they were married to a non-Jew, previously married to a non-Jew or intended to take a non-Jewish spouse. For them the outstanding problem was how to make conversion to Judaism easier.

Rabbi Nathan Peter Levinson, who addressed the seminar, pointed out that there were guiding principles for accepting or rejecting conversion. He said that whatever the situation, the task is not likely to become easier. The participants agreed that the problem is all the more difficult because of the small number of Jews living in Germany and age structure of the community.

Most of Germany's Jews live in large cities, mainly West Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg and Cologne.

HERZOG PRAISED FOR URGING DELETIONS OF 'OFFENSIVE' LINES IN A PLAY

TEL AVIV, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog won high marks in Orthodox religious circles for his intervention with the management of a Haifa theater for the deletion of certain lines from a play that offended religious sensibilities.

But he was taken sharply to task by writers, academics and the media for allegedly abetting religious censorship. None of the rabbis or other Orthodox spokesmen who were praising Herzog had seen or read the play, "The Messiah Affair", by British playwright Martin Sherman. The work deals with the 17th century false messiah, Shabtai Zvi.

The line removed from the play had a disillusioned follower of Shabtai Zvi curse God. But another line, in which a character denies the existence of God, was left intact.

Aharon Megged, chairman of the Israel branch of the PEN Club, the international association of authors and writers, sent a telegram to Herzog denouncing his interference and accused him of supporting elements who seek to restrict freedom of expression.

Herzog used the occasion of a meeting with the foreign press corps to reply. He said he had intervened only after establishing that both sides in the controversy wanted him to. He said the management of the theater, which is owned by the Haifa municipality can now say they did not bow to "religious blackmail" but were simply responding to a request by the President to avoid polarization in the community.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW SITUATION OF ETHIOPIAN JEWRY

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Feb. 9 (JTA) — The president of the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACEJ) said here that there has been some improvement in the situation of Ethiopian Jews living in the Gondar province since her last visit to the region in 1981.

However, Barbara Ribakove cautioned in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that while some conditions have improved, she was not suggesting that the situation of Ethiopian Jewry had reached what she described as an "acceptable" situation.

She explained that in the villages she visited for eight days last month, synagogues were now open after having been closed by the government in 1981. Falasha children are attending government operated schools and the villages are open to American tourists. But in other areas of the Gondar province, hard hit by famine as a result of the severe drought in North Africa and because of border skirmishes with Somalia and civil strife, the plight of the Falashas has not improved.

Cites 'Spotty Conditions'

In the case of Ethiopian Jewry, Ribakove explained, "you always have spotty conditions, better in some way in one area and different or worse in other areas." She said the recent institution of conscription of teenage youths has deeply affected the Ethiopian Jewish community.

Ribakove led a delegation of nine activists involved in the cause of Ethiopian Jewry, organized by the NACEJ, on the visit last month to Falasha villages located around the city of Gondar. It is in the villages of Ambober and Wollecka — where for the first time repeated visits were allowed — that the condition of the Falashas have improved, according to Ribakove.

She was the only member of the delegation who had previously visited Ethiopia. Other members of the delegation included a representative of the American Association for Ethiopian Jewry, which along with the NACEJ constitute the two largest volunteer organizations working for the Falashas in the U.S., and also a member of the San Francisco office of the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Dispute Over Ways to Aid Falashas

Volunteer organizations in the U.S. have at times clashed with the more established Jewish organizations on what is the best means of aiding the Falashas and on whether the Israeli government has been providing its full resources toward rescuing the Falashas. Ribakove noted the diversity of the group which participated in the latest trip and called for continued unity in the Falasha rescue efforts.

Many aspects of the Israeli effort in the rescue operation remains shrouded in secrecy, although reports clearly indicate that Falashas have been able to escape Ethiopia and reach Israel. Precise numbers of how many Falashas have reached Israel over a given period of time are unavailable and those which are published are in dispute. The Ethiopian Jewish community has been estimated at about 20,000. Emigration is illegal, banned by the Marxist government in Addis Ababa.

Nevertheless, Ribakove asserted that Israel is doing an excellent job in rescuing Falashas. "The difference between now and a few years ago is spectac-

ular," she said. Asked whether she viewed positively efforts undertaken by independent groups parallel to those taken by the Israelis in rescuing Falashas, she stated:

"There are certain areas of the rescue that I think ... are absolutely best left to the professionals and no amateur group should be involved in them. But that doesn't mean that there is no role in volunteer organizations to play in assisting this community."

Last December, an Ethiopian Jew who emigrated to Israel more than 25 years ago and who is now intimately involved with helping olim from Ethiopia in his capacity as an employe of the Jewish Agency in Israel, contended that "outside intervention" by "non-professional" groups in rescue operations should be abandoned because they "endanger the Falashas."

Ribakove did not directly dispute this contention, but maintained that the role played by the NACEJ was "absolutely vital." She stressed that among the major tasks of the NACEJ is raising American Jewish consciousness to the plight of the Falashas.

Suggest Three Significant Actions

Three significant actions can be taken by American Jewry to help their brethren in Ethiopia, Ribakove said. These are: sending messages to members of Congress asking for more U.S. aid for the drought-stricken areas of North Africa; visiting the Falasha; and providing aid through philanthropic organizations to Ethiopian Jews already in Israel.

Ribakove asserted that visits to the Falasha villages by American tourists has no adverse effects on the Falashas after the tourists leave. Some persons involved in the cause of Ethiopian Jewry have suggested that visits by Americans endanger the safety of the Falashas. But Ribakove maintained that the repeated visits to villages indicated that previous visits had no negative repercussions on the local community.

She said the repeated visits allowed for "real relationships" to be established. "We came back to a village for a fourth time and it was no longer just Ethiopian Jews but Rifka and her family" Ribakove said.

No Hebrew Books Seen

The delegation, according to Ribakove, did not see any Hebrew books, but acknowledged that "if anybody is teaching Hebrew, nobody admitted it to us." She noted that upon entering a classroom, one young Falasha used the cover from a Hebrew book to wrap the outside of an ordinary school book, apparently the Hebrew cover being one that was saved when Hebrew books were reportedly burned by the authorities.

"I did not see a book burning," Ribakove said. "I was told about it second hand. But certainly there are Hebrew books around and if they are, they are very well hidden."

The delegation was transported to certain areas by guides provided by the National Tourist Organization, and at times with a soldier accompaniment. She said certain areas were off limits to visitors because of the military situation.

The NACEJ, a non-profit organization, was founded in the summer of 1982 to work both independently and wherever possible in concert with other concerned agencies, to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of the Jews of Ethiopia, according to the NACEJ's statement of purpose.