

GEMAYEL DEFENDS HIS DECISION TO SCRAP THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT

By Edwin Eytan

LAUSANNE, March 12 (JTA) -- Lebanese President Amin Gemayel defended today his decision to scrap the May 17 peace treaty with Israel by telling the opening session of the Lebanese reconciliation conference that the abrogation of the agreement was "the sole imperative option to unify our people." Gemayel said that signing the agreement had been necessary "in order to recover our land."

The conference began this evening almost eight hours late, after the nine delegates postponed several times the official opening in order to wait for the arrival of the Syrian Foreign Minister Abdel Khalim Khadam. Finally, after several of the delegates complained about what they termed Lebanon's subservience to Syria, the conference, a follow-up to last year's Geneva meeting, started. Just as Gemayel made his opening speech, Khadam's plane landed in Geneva and he boarded a helicopter for Lausanne.

In his opening speech, Gemayel said that Lebanon's top priority was putting an end to the country's civil war and enforcing a definite and total ceasefire. He next enumerated the unification and liberation of Lebanon, the study of constitutional reforms and the formation of a government of national unity.

No Reference To Withdrawal Of Foreign Troops

Observers stressed that at no point in his four-page speech did Gemayel ask or even hint at the need to obtain a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon. Sources close to the President told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that making such a call would be most untimely. They apparently referred to the new understanding reached in Damascus between Gemayel and Syria's President Hafez Assad a week ago.

Throughout Gemayel's speech the two main opposition leaders, Walid Jumblatt who heads the Druze, and Shiite leader Nabih Berri, avoided looking in his direction. In an open gesture of defiance, Berri, who called for Gemayel's resignation on the eve of the conference's opening, stared straight ahead, while Jumblatt, who wants the President tried for war crimes, closed his eyes and folded his hands in front of his face.

Observers believe the conference will only last a couple of days more and will probably conclude with a general agreement for a cease-fire. What is unclear is who will supervise the cease-fire and who will staff the "green line" which divides east and west Beirut and along which dozens have again died this week.

U.S. KEEPING LOW PROFILE AT THE LEBANESE RECONCILIATION TALKS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 12 (JTA) -- The Reagan Administration is keeping a low profile at the second national reconciliation conference of the

various factions in Lebanon that began in Lausanne, Switzerland, today. "There is no U.S. participation in the talks at Lausanne," State Department spokesman John Hughes said. He added that a political officer from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut was present in Lausanne.

At the first reconciliation meeting, held in Geneva last October, U.S. special Mideast envoy Richard Fairbanks was present and was frequently consulted by the participants. Fairbanks, recently named an Ambassador-at-Large, is believed to be concentrating on other matters, principally the Iran-Iraq war. President Reagan's principal envoy to the Middle East, Donald Rumsfeld, has no plans to go back to the region any time soon.

After Lebanon abrogated its May 17, 1983 agreement with Israel under pressure from Syria on March 5, a condition for today's meeting in Lausanne, Secretary of State George Shultz and other State Department officials made clear that it is up to the Arabs who supported the abrogation to come up with alternative plans for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon and the return of that country to full sovereignty over all of its territory.

The U.S. is not expected to take any new initiative on Lebanon until it sees the results of the present discussions. In fact, the Administration's attention now seems to be focussed on the Iran-Iraq war and its threat to the Persian Gulf. Hughes said today that a victory by either side would not be good for the "stability" of the region.

ROSENNE SAYS EGYPT'S REFUSAL TO RETURN ITS ENVOY TO ISRAEL WILL GIVE ISRAEL PAUSE BEFORE IT NEGOTIATES WITH ANOTHER ARAB STATE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 12 (JTA) -- Israeli Ambassador Meir Rosenne warned that unless Egypt returns its Ambassador to Israel soon, "Israel will have to think twice before accepting any negotiations with another Arab state."

"If the end result of such negotiations is to see that you fulfill your obligations while the other side does not, it is not very encouraging for the peace process," he told the 2,000 men and women attending the Fourth National United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Conference at the Washington Hilton Hotel.

Noting that Syria "managed to impose the abrogation" by Lebanon of its May 17, 1983 agreement with Israel, Rosenne stressed that what was at stake was "whether international treaties can be abrogated, cancelled due to terrorist actions." He stressed that the agreement committed Israel to total withdrawal from Lebanon.

Rosenne said that Israel went into Lebanon to end the terrorist shelling against northern Israel. He said it did not matter how many terrorist attacks occurred each month. "The Jewish State was not established in order to keep 70,000 Jews (in northern Israel) living in shelters," he declared.

But Rosenne said he believes peace can be established in the Middle East if the Arab states will agree to negotiate with Israel freely without any pre-conditions. "The Palestinian question is not a question of territory,

it is the basic Arab refusal to recognize the State of Israel," he said. The Ambassador said that Israel is committed to the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinian people under the Camp David agreements. He said Israel "cannot and will not accept any plans that are submitted and that are in violation of the agreement."

Rosenne charged that any proposals by third parties no matter how well intentioned which suggest how the outcome of negotiations should be results in encouraging "recalcitrant Arab states to refuse to negotiate with Israel." Although he did not say so directly, he was apparently referring to President Reagan's September 1, 1982 peace initiative.

In a recent effort to convince Arab states to negotiate with Israel, Premier Yitzhak Shamir earlier this month reiterated his invitation to King Hussein of Jordan to enter into peace talks with Israel. Shamir repeated the invitation a few days before Hussein and PLO chief Yasir Arafat met in Amman for talks.

Rosenne placed the idea that negotiations must be held to determine the status of Jerusalem in this category. "Jerusalem has always been the capital of Israel," he declared. "We cannot accept this double standard to see that the only country in the world that does not have the right to decide what its capital is is the State of Israel."

Breger: U.S. Aid To Israel Is In America's Interest

Marshall Breger, special assistant to Reagan for liaison to the Jewish community, said that the new U.S. strategic cooperation with Israel and U.S. economic and military aid to Israel is not just to benefit the Jewish State but in "the rational self-interest of the United States."

Breger added that "it is structurally impossible over the long run to sustain in the United States pressure and support for Israel and at the same time oppose a strong United States defense posture."

Reagan is scheduled to speak to the leadership conference tomorrow. He is the second President to do so. President Carter addressed the group in 1980. The three-day conference, which ends tomorrow, sponsored by the UJA Young Leadership and Young Women's Leadership Cabinets include a wide variety of workshop meetings to deepen the participants' understanding of major public issues affecting world Jewry and to sharpen their skills in leading UJA fundraising campaigns.

HOLLAND TO MOVE ITS ONLY OFFICE IN JERUSALEM TO TEL AVIV

AMSTERDAM, March 12 (JTA) — The Netherlands Government has decided to shut down its only office in Jerusalem and transfer its functions to the Dutch Embassy in Tel Aviv. The move was said to be for reasons of economy.

The office processes the applications of Dutch Jewish emigres in Israel for special pensions under a 1972 law authorizing monthly payments to victims of Nazi persecution in Holland. So far about 2,000 Jewish immigrants have qualified.

The office will be attached to the Consular Section of the Embassy in Tel Aviv. It now occupies a building on Balfour Street in Jerusalem which had been the private residence of the Dutch Ambassador.

Holland was the only European country to have its Embassy in Jerusalem. It was shifted to Tel Aviv in 1980 as a gesture of protest against Israel's formal annexation of East Jerusalem.

REPORT IRAQ HAS BUILT SECRET UNDERGROUND CHEMICAL PLANT TO SUPPLY ITS ARMY WITH NERVE GAS By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, March 12 (JTA) — Iraq has built a secret underground chemical plant in the desert to supply its army with deadly nerve gas, according to an exclusive report in The Observer newspaper.

The report follows confirmation that Iraq has been waging chemical warfare against Iran, in defiance of the Geneva Convention of 1925.

However, the report makes it clear that the Iraqi plans for the plant were designed long before its hostilities with its fellow Moslem neighbor and when Israel was its sole military adversary.

According to the Observer, Iraq first turned unsuccessfully to the United States and Britain for help in building a plant to make highly toxic pesticides which were almost identical with nerve gas. The paper suggests that Iraq was finally helped by the Italian chemical industry.

The plant, which has been operating since 1978, is 10 miles east of Rutbah, in a remote desert area near a phosphate mine from which important ingredients are extracted.

U.S. intelligence sources, who are said to have confirmed the plant's existence, have also confirmed Iraq's use of mustard gas, a less toxic substance, several times since last autumn.

The Observer report shows that Iraq was seeking to manufacture chemical weapons at the same time that it was building up its nuclear potential, until interrupted by Israel's aerial destruction of a reactor outside Baghdad in 1981.

In the mid-1960's there were frequent reports that the Egyptian airforce was using poison gas bombs against royalist tribesmen in the Yemen. The reports were never fully investigated.

JEWS IN GERMANY EXHIBITION WILL TOUR MAJOR U.S. AREAS

NEW YORK, March 12 (JTA) — The exhibition, "Jews in Germany," illustrating the persecution of German Jews after 1933, culminating in murder and genocide, will be touring the country through 1985, it was announced here by the German Information Center.

The exhibition, originally called "Jews in Prussia," opened in September 1981 in West Berlin and has since appeared throughout West Germany. It comprises numerous photos, documents and illustrations recounting the history of Jews in Germany.

It focuses on the significant contributions made by Jews, highlighting many examples of exceptional individuals in all areas of intellectual and cultural life, in science, art, industry and trade. It tells the story of the gradual legal and social emancipation of the Jews while documenting on the other hand the survival of prejudice and discrimination.

Last February 9, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in addressing the German Parliament, said that Germany's "intellectual and cultural existence would have been unthinkable without the Jewish contribution," the German Information Center recalled.

The exhibition in the U.S. will be at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit to April 6; University of Pittsburgh, William Pitt Union, during June; Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, November 9-December 9; and the New York Public Library sometime early 1985, according to the Information Center.

The exhibition in the U.S. is made possible by help from the West German Foreign Office and by support from Lufthansa Airlines, the Center said.

STATE DEPT. MUM ON SHULTZ WARNING AGAINST MOVING U.S. EMBASSY IN ISRAEL FROM TEL AVIV TO JERUSALEM

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 12 (JTA) -- The State Department refused to comment today on a report that Secretary of State George Shultz has warned Congress that if it approves legislation moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, it could lead to anti-American violence in the Islamic world.

State Department spokesman John Hughes said that Lawrence Eagleburger, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, had made the Reagan Administration's position "plain" when he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 23 against the bill introduced by Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D. N.Y.) which would require the move.

Eagleburger said that moving the Embassy to Jerusalem "would serve only to undermine our ability to play an effective role in the Middle East peace process."

Moynihan argued, however, that the move would contribute to peace since it would end "any doubt in the minds of the enemies of Israel as to the commitment of the U.S. to the permanence of the State of Israel."

House Panel To Hold Hearings Soon

A House Foreign Affairs Committee's subcommittee is expected to hold hearings soon on a similar bill, introduced by Reps. Tom Lantos (D. Calif.) and Benjamin Gilman (R. N.Y.).

At the Senate Committee hearing, Sen. Charles Percy (R. Ill.), the Committee chairman, read a letter from Shultz in which he said the legislation would interfere with the President's constitutional right to conduct foreign policy. A Senate source confirmed to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today that Shultz has sent a second letter to Percy in which he mentioned the possibility of violence.

State Department officials have been claiming for years that moving the Embassy could result in acts of violence against Americans in the Middle East.

MK WARNS THAT ISRAEL'S FUTURE IS AT STAKE UNLESS GAP IS NARROWED BETWEEN SEPHARDIM AND ASHKENAZIM

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 12 (JTA) -- Israeli MK Meir Shitrit (Likud) warned here today that unless the educational and social gap between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Israel is narrowed, and more money and resources are channeled to improve the education of neglected youngsters, Israel's future is at stake.

"The real threat to Israel is not from the Arabs, but from the erosion of the human advantage in Israel as a result of lack of proper education to the disadvantaged in Israel, most of them of Sephardic origin," Shitrit, a member of the Finance and Education Committees, said.

Shitrit spoke at a press conference held by the International Sephardic Education Foundation (ISEF) to announce the launching of a campaign to establish a \$1 million endowment fund for Sephardic students. He said that the issue of education "must become the priority of Israel and world Jewry, so that every child in Israel fulfills its potentials to the limit."

In announcing the new endowment fund, Nina Weiner, ISEF president, said that its goal is to provide "increased scholarship aid to students in Israel of Sephardic background."

She noted that since its inception, the ISEF has distributed more than \$2 million for 4,000 scholarships to university students in Israel, as well as to small groups of Sephardic students in post-graduate programs throughout the world.

The ISEF was established seven years ago with the declared purpose of narrowing the educational and social gap between the ethnic groups in Israel.

Shitrit arrived here yesterday for one week to assist the ISEF in the new campaign.

LAWMAKERS URGE MAIMONIDES STAMP

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 12 (JTA) -- A move is going on in Congress to urge the U.S. Postal Service to issue a stamp in 1985 to mark the 850th anniversary of the birth of the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides.

It was initiated by Reps. Gary Ackerman and Robert Garcia (both D. N.Y.), Benjamin Gilman (R. N.Y.) and Tony Coelho (D. Cal.), all of whom are members of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee.

A spokesman for Ackerman said they acted at the suggestion of Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

The four Congressmen have so far got the signatures of 53 of their colleagues on a letter to Belmont Faries, chairman of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, the body that decides who should be commemorated on postage stamps. A decision is expected this month.

"1985 marks the 850th anniversary of the birth of Moses Maimonides, the distinguished Jewish philosopher, physician and spiritual leader whose humanitarian spirit and scholarly influence are appreciated by Jews and non-Jews alike," the letter said.

"The many accomplishments of Maimonides in scientific research, medical practice, and the codification of Jewish law and practices, make him one of the most important spiritual and intellectual figures of the Middle Ages. His ability to transcend cultural differences and act as a bridge between East and West is also a worthy model for all of us in these critical times."

Hoenlein, in urging Jewish community support for the effort, said that "this would be a meaningful gesture not only for the Jewish community but for the community as a whole. Together with an educational campaign, it will help establish Maimonides as a role model, a hero to be emulated by young people."

Maimonides, whose grave is in Tiberias, is best known today for his "13 Principles of Faith," which is traditionally recited at Friday evening services, and his work, "A Guide for the Perplexed."

The legislators, in their letter, also stated: "As members of Congress we believe that it would be most appropriate for the United States to honor this great figure by issuing a commemorative stamp next year. Both Spain, the place of Maimonides' birth, and Israel where he is buried, are similarly, honoring his birth."

SPECIAL INTERVIEW UPSURGE IN AMERICAN TOURISM IN ISRAEL By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 12 (JTA) — After two years of almost no growth in American tourism to Israel, tourists from the United States are now visiting Israel in record numbers.

"In fact, more American tourists visited Israel in 1983 than in any other single year since Israel was established," Moshe Shoshani, Israel's Commissioner for Tourism in North America, said in an interview here with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

According to Shoshani, 395,500 tourists from North America visited Israel last year compared with 295,000 in 1982. "This is an increase of some 100,000 tourists, which is a growth of about 34 percent," he noted. He said that the bulk of the North American tourists to Israel comes from the United States, and the rest from Canada and Mexico. The number of U.S. tourists was 354,500; from Canada, 33,000; and from Mexico, 8,000.

Two Major Factors Cited

Shoshani said, in reply to a question, that he attributes the dramatic increase in the number of tourists to Israel to two major factors:

"First and foremost is the end, or what appears to be the end, of the economic recession in the United States. Secondly, last year, for the first time, we undertook a major advertising campaign to encourage tourism to Israel. Our advertising budget was considerably larger than in previous years and stood at \$1.5 million, compared with \$500,000 before. The campaign, concentrating mostly on TV and the print media has proved to be most effective."

Shoshani pointed out that although Americans were only 33 percent of the total number of tourists to Israel in 1983 — which stood at 1.166 million — they spent in Israel about \$400 million, or 40 percent of the total \$1 billion tourists spent in Israel last year.

He said that the war in Lebanon, in his view, did not have a meaningful effect on the number of tourists to Israel. "The world has become accustomed to tension in the Mideast, and an event such as the war in Lebanon had only a partial influence on the number of American tourists to Israel," Shoshani contended.

Trying To Break Into the General Market

He conceded that most of the tourist movement to Israel is an "ethnic tourism," with some 65 percent of the tourists Jews and the rest Christians who visit the Holy Land for religious reasons, "to follow the steps of Jesus," as Shoshani put it.

"We are trying very hard to break into the general market," he said, noting that the theme of the Tourism Ministry's advertising campaign is "Come to Israel, Stay With Friends." He observed: "We purposely say stay with friends, not with family, in order to encourage the general public to visit Israel and enjoy their vacations there."

Shoshani predicted that the upsurge in tourism to Israel will continue and that in 1984 more than 400,000 North Americans will visit Israel. He said that in January 1983, 11,000 Americans visited Israel, while last January 19,000 American tourists came to Israel, an increase of 43 percent.

"Barring any unforeseen developments, we believe that in 1985 we will reach the magic number of a half million tourists from North America to Israel," Shoshani said.

TEACHER WHO PREACHED ANTI-SEMITISM IN HIS CLASSROOM TO HAVE A PRELIMINARY HEARING IN JUNE By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, March 12 (JTA) — Jim Keegstra, the former high school teacher fired for preaching anti-Semitism in his Eckville, Alberta classroom, emerged from a courthouse last week to the cheers of supporters who carried signs charging that he was being "persecuted by Jews."

Keegstra, who had also been Mayor of Eckville and was defeated in a re-election bid last year, faces charges of violating Canada's anti-hate laws. He appeared in a Red Deer, Alberta, provincial court only briefly to officially state his preference for trial by jury instead of a trial before a judge.

The Red Deer courthouse was packed with spectators as Judge Ben Carson set aside the week of June 4-8 for a preliminary hearing. If the inquiry produces sufficient evidence for trial, Keegstra will have to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty at that time.

He will be charged with promoting hatred against a religious group, which is a crime under Canadian law. Keegstra was fired for telling his students that the Holocaust was a hoax, that Jews are the root of all evil, and that there was an international Jewish conspiracy to control the world. His anti-Semitic indoctrination raised protests from Eckville parents although no Jews live in that tiny Alberta village.

But Keegstra apparently has friends. As he left the Red Deer court with his lawyer, Doug Christie, a Western Canada separatist, about 40 of them burst into applause. They had been picketing the court with signs reading, "Cowardly Politicians Crucifying Jim Keegstra" and "Who's Next? Keegstra Persecuted by Jews."

Keegstra, smiling broadly, refused to talk to reporters except to say he was pleased by the amount of money people have donated for his defense. His wife, who says she is "sick" of the publicity, confirmed that he has received hundreds of letters of support from all over Canada and only a few critical ones.

A FUTURE OF UPS AND DOWNS? By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 12 (JTA) — An upper Galilee ambulance driver drew a sigh of relief when he rushed a pregnant woman from Kfar Szold to the Safed maternity hospital yesterday, and got her there just on time. But his relief was short-lived.

He escorted the 22-year-old woman and her husband in the elevator to the fourth floor delivery room. On its way up, the elevator got stuck. While a hospital midwife shouted instructions down the elevator shaft, the driver delivered the baby before the elevator could be started again.

Babies born on buses and aircraft are frequently given free lifetime travel passes. Hospital staffers were today wondering what sort of pass they could give to the elevator baby.

IDF SOLDIER DIES OF WOUNDS

TEL AVIV, March 12 (JTA) — Gabi Jackman, 19, of Tel Aviv died yesterday of wounds he sustained during an explosion in the port of Sidon eight days ago. He was one of 11 Israel Defense Force soldiers wounded in the explosion.