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**At The Republican Party Convention
GOP PLATFORM REAFFIRMS U.S. MORAL,
STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL**
By David Friedman

DALLAS, Aug. 20 (JTA) -- The Republican national convention opened here today ready to renominate President Reagan and Vice President George Bush and to adopt a platform tomorrow night that reaffirms the United States "moral and strategic relationship with Israel."

But while the Republican Party will continue to stress the bipartisan support for Israel, on domestic issues, the platform, which is the most conservative in recent history, has some planks that have long been opposed by most American Jews, particularly school prayer.

However, the Republicans, who have made no secret that they expect to make major gains in the Jewish community this year, believe the platform does contain a major selling point, its strong opposition to quotas; especially since the Democratic candidate, former Vice President Walter Mondale, agreed to drop opposition to quotas as a means of gaining support from the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

"Americans demand a civil rights policy premised on the letter of Civil Rights Act of 1964," the Republican platform states. "That law requires equal rights; and it is our policy to end discrimination on account of sex, race, color, creed or national origin"

"Just as we must guarantee opportunity, we oppose attempts to dictate results. We will resist efforts to replace equal rights with discriminatory quota systems and preferential treatment. Quotas are the most insidious form of discrimination: reverse discrimination against the innocent. We must always remember that, in a free society, different individual goals will yield different results."

Opposition To Anti-Semitism

Before dealing with the quota issue, the platform includes the promised plank opposing anti-Semitism. "The Republican Party reaffirms its support of the pluralism and freedom that have been part and parcel of this great country. In so doing, it repudiates and completely disassociates itself from people, organizations, publications and those entities which promulgate the practice of any form of bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism or religious intolerance."

The Democratic Party failed to adopt a similar resolution at its convention or at the National Committee meeting following the convention. However, the executive committee of the National Committee, at the urging of Mondale, approved such a resolution two weeks ago in a telephone poll.

On school prayer, the platform says: "We have enacted legislation to guarantee equal access to student facilities by student religious groups. Mindful of our religious diversity, we reaffirm our commitment to the freedom of religion and speech guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and firmly support the rights of students to openly practice the same, including the right to engage in voluntary prayer in schools."

The Republican platform also favors a Constitutional Convention to adopt an amendment to the Constitution requiring a balanced federal budget, which the organized Jewish community has strongly opposed.

The platform urges Congress to pass the balanced budget amendment, noting that the Democrats oppose it. "If Congress fails to act on this issue, a Constitutional Convention should be convened to address only this issue in order to bring deficit spending under control," the platform states.

Jewish groups have opposed a Constitutional Convention because they fear it could begin rewriting the Constitution, including the First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom which have been so vital to Jewish security in the U.S. While the Republican plank underlines the word "only" to stress that just the budget restriction would be addressed, some Constitutional experts have argued that a Constitutional Convention could not be limited to one issue.

U.S., Israel Closer Than Ever

In the Middle East section, the platform stresses that a strong Israel, aided by the U.S., is "the main obstacle to Soviet domination of the region" and "the sovereignty, security and integrity of the State of Israel is a moral imperative." The platform contends that under Reagan, the U.S. and Israel "are closer than ever before."

The platform stresses that "Jerusalem should remain an undivided city," but it does not call it the capital of Israel as does the Democratic platform. The Republicans also ignored the Democratic call for moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

GOP Mideast Platform

The GOP Mideast platform reads, in full:

"President Reagan's Middle East policy has been flexible enough to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, yet consistent and credible so that all nations recognize our determination to protect our vital interests."

"The President's skillful crisis management throughout the Iran-Iraq war has kept that conflict from damaging our vital interests. The President's peace efforts have won strong bipartisan support and international applause. And his willingness to stand up to Libya has made peace-loving states in the region feel more secure."

"The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which surprised the Carter-Mondale Administration, brought Soviet forces less than 400 miles from the strategic straits of Hormuz. The seizure of American hostages in Iran that year caught the United States unprepared and unable to respond."

"Lebanon is still in turmoil, despite our best efforts to foster stability in that unhappy country. With the Syrian leadership increasingly subject to Soviet influence, and the Palestine Liberation Organization and its homicidal subsidiaries taking up residence in Syria, U.S. policy toward the region must remain vigilant and strong."

"Republicans reaffirm that the United States should not recognize or negotiate with the PLO so long as that organization continues to promote terrorism, rejects Israel's right to exist and refuses to accept UN (Security Council) resolutions 242 and 338."

Continuing, the platform states: "the bedrock of that protection remains, as it has for over three decades, our moral and strategic relationship with Israel. We are allies in the defense of freedom. Israel's strength, coupled with United States assistance, is the main obstacle to Soviet domination in the region. The sovereignty, security, and integrity of the State of Israel is a moral imperative. We pledge to help maintain Israel's qualitative military edge over its adversaries."

"Today, relations between the United States and Israel, are closer than ever before. Under President Reagan, we have moved beyond mere words to extensive political military and diplomatic cooperation. U.S.-Israeli strategic planning groups are coordinating our joint defense efforts, and we are directly supporting projects to augment Israel's defense industrial base. We support the legislation pending for an Israeli-U.S. free trade area."

"We recognize that attacks in the UN against Israel are but thinly disguised attacks against the United States, for it is our shared ideals and democratic way of life that is their true target. Thus, when a UN agency denied Israel's right to participate, we withheld our financial support until that action was corrected. And we have worked behind the scenes and in public in other international organizations to defeat discriminatory attacks against our ally."

"Our determination to participate actively in the peace process, begun at Camp David, has won us support over the past four years from moderate Arab states. Israel's partner in the Camp David accords, Egypt, with American support, has been a constructive force for stability. We pledge continued support to Egypt and other moderate regimes against Soviet and Libyan subversion, and we look to them to contribute to our efforts for a long-term settlement of the region's destructive dispute."

"We believe that Jerusalem should remain an undivided city with free and unimpeded access to all the holy places by people of all faiths."

There is no mention of U.S. arms supplies to Saudi Arabia or other moderate Arab countries. The Democratic platform opposes the sale of sophisticated weapons to Arab countries who have refused to negotiate peace with Israel.

The platform also calls terrorism "a new form of warfare against the democracies." It points out that Reagan "has put the UN on notice that the U.S. will strongly oppose the use of the UN to foster anti-Semitism, Soviet espionage, and hostility to the United States."

Cites Campaign To Erect Holocaust Memorial

In another section, the platform says that "the Republican Campaign commends President Reagan for accepting the honorary chairmanship of the campaign to erect a U.S. Holocaust memorial in Washington, D.C. and supports the efforts of the U.S. Holocaust Council in erecting such a museum and educational center. The museum will bear witness to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust."

Support For Soviet Jewry

Support for Soviet Jewry is reaffirmed at the end of the section on the Soviet Union. "We will press for Soviet compliance with all international agreements, including the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the UN Declaration on Human Rights," the platform states.

"We will continue to protest Soviet anti-Semitism and human rights violations. We admire the courage of such people as Andrei Sakharov, his wife Yelena Bonner, Anatoly Shcharansky, Ida Nudel and Josef Begun, whose defiance of Soviet repression stands as a testament to the greatness of the human spirit."

"We will press the Soviet Union to permit free emigration of Jews, Christians, and oppressed national minorities. Finally, because the peoples of the Soviet empire share our hope for the future, we will strengthen our information channels to encourage them in their struggle for individual freedom, national self-determination and peace."

LABOR-LIKUD TALKS INCH FORWARD

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 20 (JTA) -- Labor and Likud have made some headway towards a unity government, but they still have a long way to go.

At a meeting of their foreign policy working group last night in the Knesset, the two parties agreed on wording to express the proposed government's policy on Lebanon. But they are still far apart on the two key substantive issues -- settlements in the West Bank and terms for peace talks with Jordan. In addition, they have yet to tackle the toughest problem of all -- the Premiership.

Political observers expect Labor Party leader Shimon Peres to meet with Premier Yitzhak Shamir on this before he reports back to President Chaim Herzog and requests an extension of the initial 21-day period granted him by the President to try and form a government. That period ends next Sunday.

Issue Of The Knesset Speaker

Meanwhile, in the Knesset today, Labor and Likud conducted a battle of wills over the office of Speaker, following legal opinions that Yosef Burg, who is the Interior Minister, cannot continue serving as temporary Speaker because there is a conflict of interest between the Executive and Legislative branches of the government. This issue was settled later in the day when Labor MK Abba Eban was elected temporary Speaker until a permanent Speaker is elected. (See separate story.)

Likud sees the Speakership as closely linked to the overall coalition-making process and is seeking, therefore, to delay the election of a permanent Speaker pending clarification of the coalition situation. The new Knesset met last week and then adjourned, unable to conduct business until a government is installed.

Concern Over Paralysis Of The Knesset

Herzog expressed "concern" today over the Knesset's paralysis and its failure to elect its presidium -- a Speaker and two deputies -- and to begin its work. (There can be no parliamentary activity of any consequence until the presidium is elected.)

Herzog discussed this matter with Labor's Moshe Shahal, chairman of the ad hoc Knesset arrangements committee, the body which normally arranges for the presidium election as soon as a new Knesset is sworn in and then ceases to exist.

Of the dozen-odd Knesset committees, only two have been formed (by Labor-Likud agreement endorsed by the plenary at the Knesset's opening session). These are the finance committee and the foreign affairs and defense committee, but the composition of the two committees is only temporary, pending the formation of a government.

The legal aid to the arrangements committee, Zvi Inbar, is pressing for the creation of other Knesset committees, too -- even on a temporary basis -- so as to enable regular parliamentary work to go forward.

In the Labor-Likud discussions on foreign policy, Labor is still holding out for a "special majority" procedure in the proposed unity Cabinet to decide on the issue of the creation of new settlements. Likud insists on a simple majority. Labor fears that Tehiya might yet join a unity government, thus providing an automatic majority for any new settlement that anyone proposes.

Thorny Issue Of Jordan

On Jordan, Likud insists that the basic policy guideline document of the proposed government does not stray from close adherence to the Camp David peace plan. Labor wants Jordan invited to peace talks "without prior conditions," arguing that Jordan was not a signatory to the Camp David plan and therefore cannot be required to negotiate on the basis of Camp David exclusively.

Deputy Premier David Levy, whom Labor participants in the talks with Likud branded last week as "obstreperous," was carefully moderate at yesterday's session. "Let's forget about (King) Hussein," he said. "We'll deal with that trouble when it happens. Let's just get ahead with forming a government."

But Labor participants were quick to point out that while for them peace talks with Hussein were a desirable goal, for Levy they were a "trouble." Some Labor sources let it be known over the week-end that the Alignment was prepared to form a narrow-based coalition government: if talks with Likud continued to be stalled.

Labor's hopes of leading a unity government -- or even a narrow-based coalition government -- were rekindled tonight with the news that Ezer Weizman of Yahad and Yigael Hurvitz of the Courage to Cure the Economy let it be known that they would not support a Likud-led narrow government under any circumstances. Without them, Shamir has no chance of setting up a government.

Weizman and Hurvitz are understood to have been influenced in their decisions by the rapidly worsening economic situation for which they blame the Likud leadership. Weizman's party has three Knesset seats, and Hurvitz's has one.

EBAN IS TEMPORARY KNESSET SPEAKER

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 20 (JTA) -- The Knesset arrangements committee today elected Labor MK Abba Eban as temporary Speaker. He was elected on the basis of being the eldest Knesset member, after Yosef Burg.

The vote took place after Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir and Knesset legal advisors ruled that Burg's position as Interior Minister and as Speaker represented a conflict of interest between the Executive and Legislative branches of the government.

Labor Alignment MK Moshe Shahal, chairman of the arrangements committee, said Eban now had the authority to determine the Knesset agenda. Eban reportedly intends to call the Knesset into session, during which a permanent Speaker will be elected. The Alignment proposes former Interior Minister Shlomo Hillel as its candidate for Knesset Speaker.

The committee rejected a proposal by the Alignment to immediately elect a Speaker. But Alignment leaders said that although they had lost the

battle, they would win the war. Eban was elected with the backing of the Alignment and Shas. The Knesset is likely to convene within the next two weeks, but will immediately afterwards recess for the High Holy Days. In the meantime, the Alignment and Likud will try to activate the various Knesset committees.

IDF CLOSES OFF SOUTH LEBANON FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 20 (JTA) -- South Lebanon has been effectively cut off from the rest and larger portion of Lebanon by the closing, this morning for three days, by the IDF of the bridge over the Awali river, north of Jezzine, in the central sector.

The IDF said the closure was in implementation of special security measures to prevent the smuggling of terrorist materials into the Israeli-controlled south Lebanon, in which a mounting toll of terrorist attacks on IDF personnel is being reported.

The closure is said to be similar to that in effect at the bridges over the Jordan River where vehicles, coming from Jordan to the West Bank, have their cargoes offloaded at a specially-built terminal for careful examination. The loads are then placed on Israeli-licensed vehicles. Passengers also are searched at the terminal building and then proceed on Israeli buses.

Lebanese officials have denounced the searches which cause much delay for both people and vehicles but the Israelis reply that the measures are essential to reduce terrorist attacks.

The crossover point on the Awali River on the coastal road near Sidon has been inoperative for about eight months but not because of any Israeli actions. The Lebanese are unwilling to use the coastal road south from Beirut because of barricades and check points set up by various militia groups, some of which demand "taxes" for permission for movement of goods.

Lebanese Children To Attend Israeli Camp

Meanwhile, some 200 Lebanese school children are scheduled to attend a week-long camp at Ashkelon national park next week, arranged by the IDF liaison unit in south Lebanon. They are residents of Tyre, Sidon, Nabatiya, Jezzine, Hasbaya and a number of smaller towns in south Lebanon. The camp's purpose has been described as strengthening ties between Lebanese school children and Israel.

Between 20 and 30 Lebanese teachers, students and municipal officials will visit Israel next week. In Jerusalem, they will tour the holy sites, visit the Knesset and meet with government officials.

In other developments, the IDF has denied charges that Israel is digging an underground tunnel near Deir Mimas where the Litani River bends sharply westward only some three miles from the Israeli border north of Metullah. According to Beirut reports, Israel is planning to divert Litani River waters into Israel. Such fears have frequently been expressed in Lebanon and abroad.

Denying such rumors, the IDF said the only earth-works now being carried out anywhere in the area is construction of an anti-tank ditch near Lake Kargun farther north. Israeli army and government spokesmen have described the rumors of water diversion plans as "nonsense."

CONSERVATIVE RABBIS CONCERNED BY POSSIBLE 'HEIGHTENED TENSIONS' BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS DURING THE COMING CHRISTMAS SEASON

By Ben Gallab

NEW YORK, Aug. 20 (JTA) — Concerned by the possibility of "heightened tension" between Jews and Christians in the coming Christmas holiday season, stemming from the Supreme Court decision upholding the right of officials of Pawtucket, R.I. to create creche displays on public property, the Rabbinical Assembly, the association of Conservative rabbis, has asked its 1,200 members to explain to Christians and municipal officials the Jewish objection to such displays on public property during the Yule period.

Rabbi Alexander Shapiro of South Orange, N.J., RA president, predicted possible "communal disputes" in many American cities, adding that "this coming holiday season could be turned into one of anger and tension rather than one of happiness and celebration."

Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, RA executive vice president, said the request to the Conservative rabbis was the first in the RA's history, stressing that it involved the strategy of rabbis approaching local Christians and municipal officials on an individual basis and that the appeal was not one from the RA itself.

The request to the RA members was contained in a communication from the RA Social Action Committee, headed by Rabbi Myron Fenster of Roslyn, N.Y.

Urges Interfaith Counseling

Shapiro said "we call upon all clergy, Christian and Jewish, to counsel with one another in the communities throughout this country in which a creche display is contemplated to avoid such a step."

Shapiro said "the Jewish community must make it clear to the Christian community our deep sensitivity regarding such an infringement on church-state separation."

Fenster said that "most people probably do not realize the damaging effect such a municipally-sponsored or school display has on the psyche of Jewish children. Many cases exist where young people have given expression to their feelings of confusion and dismay at seeing Christian symbols displayed on public property."

Fenster said he believed that by holding advance discussions and providing the views of the synagogue and Jewish organizations well ahead of time, "we will help to forestall exacerbating misunderstandings."

He suggested that churches and synagogues be encouraged to erect holiday displays on church and synagogue property. He said his congregation at Shelter Rock Jewish Center planned to build a large Menorah and festively observe Chanuka which begins on the eve of December 18.

Fenster stressed that the Supreme Court ruling "did not read the Constitution as holding there is a right to a creche, or that it was wise for a municipality to erect one, only that such displays did not violate the Establishment Clause."

He said the decision did not mean that municipalities are now required to build a creche because "it still remains in the power of municipal authorities to reject such displays as not being a wise or proper or fair municipal policy." He added that the decision was "open to review, to objection and even to further litigation when an appropriate case arises."

Fenster quoted the dissenting opinion of Associate Justice William Brennan, Jr. that "this creche is a coercive though perhaps small step toward establishing the sectarian preference of the majority at the expense of the minority," adding that warning "should be taken seriously by all of us."

He also noted that Chief Justice Warren Burger, writing for the 5-4 majority opinion, held that "the creche is passive like a painting. To forbid the use of this passive symbol would be a select over-reaction contrary to our history."

Such an appraisal, Fenster commented "is obviously that of a Christian. It is certainly not that of a Jew or of an upholder of another religion or no religion." The rabbi added caustically that "one would expect the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to be sensitive to the needs of all the people of this country."

AUSTRALIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY PROTESTS MALAYSIA'S BAN ON JEWISH COMPOSER

By Sam Lipski

MELBOURNE, Aug. 20 (JTA) — The Australian government has been asked to convey to the Malaysian government the protest and indignation of the Australian Jewish community over Kuala Lumpur's ban on works of a Jewish composer.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bill Hayden, after the controversy which led to the cancellation of a concert tour of Malaysia by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Council president, Isi Leibler, condemned the Malaysian government's policy against the "screening, portrayal or musical presentation of works of Jewish origin" as contemptible racism. Leibler said that if Malaysia persisted with such policies, its efforts to improve its standing in critical areas of Australian public opinion would suffer.

He noted that Malaysia's Prime Minister had visited Australia earlier this month to attract investment and encourage greater co-operation between the two countries. "Malaysia's officially endorsed intolerance is not only offensive to Jews, it will be considered abhorrent by all in large sections of Australian society," Leibler added.

Malaysian government officials demanded that the New York Philharmonic drop a score composed by Jewish composer Ernest Bloch during its scheduled concerts there next month. The officials said they objected to the composition, "Schelemo, A Hebrew Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra," because of the word Hebrew. Malaysia did not oppose the inclusion of works by other Jewish composers in the program, such as Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin and Aaron Copland.

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TEL AVIV (JTA) — A group of 45 teen-age Israeli athletes are scheduled to come to the United States this week to take part in the North American Maccabiah Games to be held in Detroit. They will participate in the fields of gymnastics, tennis, table tennis, basketball, and swimming. The athletes will be accompanied by five trainers, one in each field; a team manager; and Azriel Milchan, deputy chairman of Maccabi Israel. The Games are expected to be attended by some 1,500 athletes between the ages of 12 to 16 from the U.S., Canada, Europe and other areas.