

U.S. SUGGESTING WAYS TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT ON THE TABA BORDER DISPUTE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 20 (JTA) -- The United States has offered suggestions to bridge the gap between Israel and Egypt which has delayed submission of the Taba border dispute to binding arbitration. It is mainly a matter of wording.

The Israeli and Egyptian delegations resumed their discussions here Monday, with the State Department's top legal advisor, Abraham Sofaer, attending the sessions. He was sent here by Secretary of State George Shultz and arrived in Jerusalem after talks in Cairo over the weekend with the head of the Egyptian negotiating team, Ambassador Nebil Al-Araby.

Sofaer's proposed formulations were not disclosed. Avraham Tamir, Director General of the Prime Minister's Office who heads the Israeli team, told reporters that the main dispute focuses on "one word." Informed sources said the key word is "correct."

The problem which has engaged the Israeli and Egyptian negotiators for months is the wording of the questions to be put to the arbitration panel which must decide on which side of the Sinai border the tiny Taba region is located. That hinges on where the Turks placed the original border markers 80 years ago.

Issue Of The Word 'Correct'

Israel wants the arbitrators to be asked to ascertain the "correct" position of the markers laid down in 1906. It would enable them to submit evidence and arguments regarding the intentions of the Turkish and British map-makers at the time.

Egypt wants a formulation that would ask for the exact or precise position. Elimination of the word "correct" would strengthen Cairo's contention that what should be ascertained is where the border line ran in the past.

The U.S. wants the Taba dispute settled as soon as possible so that Israel and Egypt can proceed with the task of normalizing and improving their bilateral relations. The Israelis are of a like mind, which is why they agreed, reluctantly, to Egypt's insistence on binding arbitration rather than conciliation that would result in compromise. Premier Shimon Peres has stated repeatedly of late that Israel and Egypt must make a sustained effort to agree on the arbitration document.

U.S. ASKS THE USSR TO RESTRAIN SYRIA

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 20 (JTA) -- The United States has asked the Soviet Union to restrain Syria from potentially provocative actions near Israel's northern borders which might bring it into conflict with Israel, Voice of Israel Radio reported Tuesday.

According to the report, the Americans approached Soviet representatives in Washington last week. The talks were at the senior officials level, Voice of Israel Radio said, and the Russians

were urged to caution Damascus against advancing its forces into the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon or strengthening its troop concentrations along the Golan Heights.

At the same time, the U.S. reportedly issued warnings to Israel and Syria to avoid hostile actions. But the Reagan Administration commended the two countries over the weekend for statements by their leaders which it said had helped ease the tension between them.

President Hafez Assad of Syria was quoted in a Washington Post interview as saying that neither his country nor Israel had undertaken any unusual troop movements recently and that tensions had been lessened.

Premier Shimon Peres said in a U.S. television interview Sunday that he did "not see an immediate danger of war between us and Syria." He castigated the Syrians, however, for giving shelter to terrorists such as Abu Nidal, George Habash, Nayef Hawatmeh and Abu Moussa.

GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER, IN MEETING WITH ISRAELI OFFICIAL, SEEKS TO SHED HIS REPUTATION AS HARD-LINE PRO-ARAB

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, May 20 (JTA) -- Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias, regarded as the most pro-Arab Minister in the Socialist government of Premier Andreas Papandreou, seemed to go out of his way to disavow that reputation at a meeting here Monday morning with Israel's Minister of Tourism, Avraham Sharir.

Sharir, on a five-day official visit concerned mainly with tourism and economic matters, paid a courtesy call on the Foreign Minister and was apparently surprised by the warmth of his welcome. Papoulias stressed that "our differences on the political level should not interfere with the process of forming closer ties between Israel and Greece."

He added, "We realize Israel's importance and its role in the future." He also affirmed that Greece recognizes Israel's right to exist within secure borders but made no reference to the Palestinian question in connection with Israel's right. He went on to extend a formal invitation to the Israeli Ministers of agriculture, science and industry to visit Greece.

At the end of their meeting, Papoulias waived the usual protocol and escorted his guest out of the Foreign Ministry and shook hands with him in front of photographers. Sharir is the first Israeli Cabinet Minister to visit Greece in an official capacity since 1962.

He met earlier Monday with Kostas Simitis, the Minister of Economy, and they agreed that combatting international terrorism should be one of the main objectives of the newly strengthened cooperation between Greece and Israel.

Observers here said the Greeks doubtlessly are trying their best to improve relations with Israel. But they are exercising extreme caution. Apart from picture-taking sessions, Sharir's visit has had little coverage in the local media. An Israeli diplomatic source agreed that the rhetoric has improved but he has seen "nothing concrete."

DUTCH F.M. SAYS HE WON'T INVITE ARAFAT TO MEET WITH HIM BUT WILL NOT REFUSE INVITATION FROM ARAFAT

AMSTERDAM, May 20 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Hans Van Den Broek said Tuesday that he will not invite Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat to meet with him when he visits Tunisia next week, but on the other hand, he will not refuse a meeting if it is asked for.

In that connection, Van Den Broek noted in a radio interview that since 1980, the European Economic Community (EEC) has held the position that the views of all parties to the Middle East conflict must be heard. He was referring to the Venice declaration by the EEC Ministers which stated that the PLO should be "associated" with future peace talks in the Middle East.

Van Den Broek, who currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the EEC's Council of Ministers, received the Israeli Ambassador to Holland, Zeev Suffoth, at The Hague Tuesday morning to explain the EEC position. Reports from Jerusalem Tuesday said Israel planned to lodge a formal protest with The Netherlands government against a Van Den Broek-Arafat meeting.

The Foreign Minister said in the radio interview that his trip to Tunisia was mainly to discuss with the Arab League Council there how to revive the moribund European-Arab dialogue. He said he would also discuss what measures the European Community and the Arab League could take jointly to combat international terrorism.

AJC LEADER SAYS THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS MARKED BY DIVERSITY OF OPINION AND IS NOT A SINGLE-ISSUE COMMUNITY By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 20 (JTA) -- Howard Friedman ended his three years as president of the American Jewish Committee by praising the increasing growth of diversity of opinion on all issues in the American Jewish community.

There has been a "false perception" of the Jewish community as a single-issue community partly "bolstered by the tendency in our community to create structures that purport to speak with a single Jewish voice," Friedman said at the AJCommittee's 80th anniversary annual meeting.

"While our various umbrella organizations render many important services, the American Jewish Committee has always been uneasy about participation in such structures because we strongly believe there is not, and should not be, a single voice for American Jewry," he explained.

"The need to avoid an artificial unanimity of Jewish opinion is more acute on issues of deep Jewish interest. Our efforts with regard to such issues are far more credible and effective when it is clear that we have come to our positions from a diversity of viewpoints and without any structural party line."

No One Jewish Answer

Friedman noted that "while Jewish history and tradition do provide a unique perspective on many public questions, including a devotion to peace, a concern for the poor and disadvantaged, and a deep and abiding commitment to the protection and security of the State of Israel, there is no one Jewish answer to any of these questions."

He stressed that "the increasing number of thoughtful, committed Jews who identify themselves with the Republican Party matches the profound commitment of equally thoughtful, committed Jews devoted to the Democratic Party -- and both the Jewish community and this nation as a whole are enriched by this phenomenon."

Message From Herzog

The AJCommittee received a message from Israeli President Chaim Herzog, who praised the organization for its efforts on behalf of Jews in the U.S. and abroad and for its growing ties with Israel.

"A web of cooperation between us is being woven," Herzog said. "I would plead, however, for more than cooperation, for understanding of the special nature of Israel, the destiny it bears, the inner meaning of its existence beyond all its tangled political, military and economic complexities."

Herzog stressed that Israel "is the core, the focus of the Jewish world and, without that focus, I would fear for the Jewish future."

Ellenoff Elected AJC President

Theodore Ellenoff was elected president of the AJCommittee, succeeding Friedman. A prominent New York attorney, he has been serving as chairperson of the AJC's Board of Governors.

A leader of AJC for many years, Ellenoff is a vice president and member of the Board of Trustees of Central Synagogue in New York City and has engaged in a broad range of community activities. A native New Yorker, he is a graduate of New York University, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He received his law degree from Harvard Law School.

RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY GOES ON RECORD AGAINST PATRILINEAL DESCENT

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y., May 20 (JTA)--The Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative movement put itself officially on record Monday as opposed to the so-called "patrilineal descent."

The action came in the form of a vote on a resolution proposed by its Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) and after a long discussion at its annual convention here.

The resolution stated that "ascription of Jewish lineage through a legal instrument or ceremonial act on the basis of anything other than matrilineal descent" or through a conversion procedure omitting tevilah (ritual immersion) for women and tevilah and brit milah (ritual circumcision) for men "shall continue to be regarded as violations of the halacha of Conservative Judaism."

It further stated that such actions will be regarded from now on as "violations of a standard of rabbinic practice inconsistent with membership in the Rabbinical Assembly."

The resolution upholding matrilineal descent which, it stated, "has been authoritative in normative Judaism for many centuries as the sole determinant of Jewish lineage," passed by a vote of 235 to 92.

The vote was taken by head count after the tally of a first vote by voice was regarded by participants as unclear.

The CJLS, which introduced the resolution, had adopted it by a 21-2 vote (with one abstain-

tion) conducted by mail ballot some months ago. The RA vote Monday made it a standard of Conservative rabbinic practice.

Statement By Rabbi Siegel

Rabbi Seymour Siegel, Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), who voted against the RA resolution, had sent a letter several weeks ago to RA members in opposition to making acceptance of matrilineal descent mandatory. He called matrilineal descent "illogical, un historical and basically unethical."

In his letter, Siegel quoted from a paper by Rabbi Shaya J.D. Cohen of JTS citing possible evidence that matrilineal descent had some roots in Roman practice. During the discussion at the RA convention, however, Cohen stated his support of matrilineal descent, adding that history must not be a factor in making or breaking halacha, according to Rabbi Ronald Price, executive director of the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism (UTCJ).

Argument Has Not Yet Ended

Price told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in a telephone interview that he was "happy with the vote," but did not think the argument for "patrilineal descent" -- which he calls "non-lineal descent" -- has ended. He had not expected the opposition to mandatory matrilineal descent "to be so strong," adding that the whole issue bears watching.

He said, however, that the 30 percent who had voted against the decision Monday included those in favor of non-lineal descent, those who opposed one single RA standard for determining Jewishness, and those who opposed expelling a rabbi from the RA for not upholding that single standard.

Price told the JTA that the resolution was instigated by the CJLS out of the "sense that something that was never a question is becoming an issue" in the Conservative movement. It became an issue, he said, after the Jewish Theological Seminary voted to ordain women rabbis two years ago, a position the UTCJ continues to oppose.

VIRGINIA SETS UP SPECIAL UNIT TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE STATE OF ISRAEL

RICHMOND, Va., May 20 (JTA) -- Governor Gerald Baliles has announced the creation of a special commission to promote and expand the economic development, educational and cultural opportunities between Virginia and Israel, in commemoration of the upcoming 40th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel in 1988.

The Governor also directed the commission, to be called the Virginia-Israel Commission, to plan a year-long program for the exchange of both people and ideas. Students, public officials, and individuals of demonstrated achievement in the fields of medicine, law, education, science, agriculture, business, the arts, religion, communications, and the media would participate.

Baliles said the work of the commission would precede his own visit to Israel, in April of 1988, as the head of a delegation of distinguished Virginians traveling there in recognition of the

40th anniversary commemoration that year. This "leadership tour" will include legislative, judicial and executive members of Virginia's government.

Premier Shimon Peres of Israel last week sent a letter to the Governor welcoming the creation of the commission, and said that "I will direct the appropriate ministries and officials of the Government of Israel to give this effort their fullest cooperation."

Peres said the action creating the commission was an "historic step in the broadening of relations between the citizens of the State of Israel and the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, specifically, and the United States, in general."

A 15-member planning council will be appointed by commission chairperson Neil November of Richmond to direct the actions of the commission. A special emphasis will be placed on economic development opportunities tied to educational and research activities.

The Governor said the commission's educational initiatives would include a comprehensive examination of the Holocaust, its historical impact, and the questions it poses for a democratic society.

LATE NEWS BULLETIN

SAUDIS DROP STINGERS FROM ARMS PACKAGE

WASHINGTON, May 20 (JTA) -- Saudi Arabia was reported late Tuesday to have dropped the 800 shoulder-fired Stinger missiles from the 2,600 missile weapons package it seeks to buy from the U.S., apparently to improve the Reagan Administration's chances of reversing overwhelming Congressional opposition to the sale. Both Houses of Congress adopted resolutions disapproving the deal with sufficient majorities to override a threatened Presidential veto. The Stinger missiles are particularly sensitive because they are easily portable and many members of Congress feared they could fall into the hands of terrorists.

FOUR ARABS INDICTED FOR KIDNAP-MURDER OF ISRAELI SOLDIER

JERUSALEM, May 20 (JTA) -- Four Arab men and two women were indicted by a Nablus military court Tuesday for the kidnap-murder of an Israeli soldier, David Manos, who disappeared more than a year ago, or other crimes.

The charge sheet named Ibrahim Abdallah of Deir Balout village, east of Petach Tikva, as ringleader. His wife was charged with driving the vehicle in which Manos was abducted and, together with her husband, of planting explosives in the Tel Aviv central bus station and at Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikva.

Mustapha Haroush, also a Deir Balout resident, was accused of complicity in the kidnap-murder of Manos. His sister-in-law was charged with planning another kidnapping and with membership in a terrorist organization. Another Deir Balout resident accused of membership in a terrorist gang allegedly was not involved in the kidnapping.

A sixth suspect, a physician from Bir Zeit village in the West Bank, was charged with membership in a terrorist organization and with providing the gang leader with information on where to store weapons and sabotage material.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

A NIGHTMARE CONTINUES IN ARGENTINA

By Aviva Cantor

(Part One Of A Three-Part Series)

NEW YORK, May 20 (JTA) -- Argentina's night of terror and carnage is over at last -- but the nightmare goes on. The dawn of democracy has brought no end to the agony of the relatives of the "desaparecidos," the 9,300 (documented) to 30,000 (estimated) individuals, mainly youths, devoured by the Moloch of the junta during its 1976-83 reign of terror.

These "disappeared persons," Argentina's contribution to the 20th century's chamber of horrors, were pulled from their beds at gunpoint in the dead of night, snatched off the streets into unmarked cars, hauled off from their offices. Never heard from again, they have no graves, not even unmarked ones. Their bodies were thrown into the sea from helicopters, burned to ashes in crematoria, and cast, mutilated and dismembered, into lime pits.

The Jewish community, traumatized by the reign of terror, now seeks, like the majority of Argentinians, to put the past behind it, fearing that disinterring the human rights atrocities might endanger the fragile democratic regime of President Raul Alfonsin. The community, however, is still rent by bitter conflict over what it did and did not do for the victims of the terror, in particular, the Jewish desaparecidos.

While these charges and counter-charges have come into the open in Argentina since the reinstitution of democracy in that country, the information the Jewish Telegraphic Agency has learned regarding the heroic rescue of Jews during the reign of terror via an "underground railroad" organized by Israelis stationed in Argentina has not been made public.

An estimated 10 percent of the desaparecidos were Jews -- a proportion higher than the Jews' one-and-a-quarter percent in the population. They included what the junta called "ideological criminals," people in psychology, the social sciences, journalism, teaching -- and over 100 children of desaparecidos. Entire chapters and all the local emissaries of Hashomer Hatzair, the Socialist Zionist youth movement, disappeared. Most of the counselors and almost the entire youth movement in Cordoba disappeared.

Since the reign of terror began in 1976, a group of women has been marching every Thursday in front of the Presidential Palace in Buenos Aires to demand an accounting on the fate of their disappeared children. They are known as the "Madres," the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Renee Epelbaum, a widow in her 60's, is one of their leaders. Her three children are among the desaparecidos; none have ever been heard from or about since their abduction. Luis, who had been a medical student concerned about his country's poor, was kidnapped in August 1977 at the age of 25. The younger children -- Claudio (then 23), a poet and musician who was studying law to be able to defend prisoners of conscience, and Lila (then 25) -- were kidnapped three months later from Uruguay. Their mother had sent them there to try to ensure their safety.

She is one of six mothers and one grandmother appearing in a recently released documentary on "Las Madres: the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo," which premiered at the Film Forum here. The film was produced and directed by Susana Munoz, an Argentine-born Jew who was active in

a Zionist youth movement, and lived in Israel from 1972-79, and Lourdes Portillo.

Epelbaum, in an interview with the JTA during her recent visit to New York in connection with the film, said that Jewish desaparecidos "were not kidnapped as Jews, but it helped. The police were more suspicious of Jews. For them, every Jew must be a Communist."

The junta, she continued, was "deeply anti-Semitic." Jews in prison received three or four times the measure of torture as non-Jews. This has been substantiated by Amnesty International, former prisoner Jacobo Timerman, and, most recently, by Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel, who was himself imprisoned and tortured for 14 months.

Epelbaum told the JTA that the DAIA, the representative body of Argentine Jewry, was not active in intervening with the authorities on behalf of Jewish desaparecidos (who became non-persons) and prisoners (whose incarceration was on record) -- a charge the DAIA emphatically denied in its 1984 document on the subject.

Rabbi Marshall Meyer, who served until recently as spiritual leader of Congregation Beth-El of Buenos Aires, was a founding member of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, and visited prisoners in jail. In a recent interview with the JTA in New York, where he now serves as rabbi of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, he criticized the DAIA for not speaking out forcefully on human rights atrocities in general.

Both Epelbaum and Meyer told JTA that the DAIA urged Jewish communities outside the country to keep silent about the horrors. Epelbaum said she was told that World Jewish Congress affiliates did so because of the WJC policy that they cannot intervene when a local affiliate, in this case the DAIA, opposes it. WJC secretary general Israel Singer told the JTA that the WJC spoke out anyway.

Heroic Rescue Work By Israelis

Meyer also revealed the scope of the unofficial rescue work the Israelis were doing in Argentina during the reign of terror: running a latter-day "underground railroad" to get Jews at risk out of the country. Israel's Ambassador until 1980, the late Ram Nirgad, and his staff "worked tirelessly night and day, and saved hundreds of Jews," he said. "He was involved with every case." Meyer described the operation: when a Jew was kidnapped, the next thing the security forces would do was get ahold of his or her address book and seize all her or his friends and acquaintances. Nirgad and his people, therefore, quickly compiled a list of names of all the friends and colleagues of a disappeared person, who were at grave risk.

"We went from door to door, from house to house," he continued, "persuading parents to let their children go with us. They had to leave at once." Meyer would not disclose the route out of Argentina or the immediate country of destination. Dov Schmorak, who took over Nirgad's job until 1985, told the JTA last year that he and the DAIA made secret arrangements with the government and security forces who would let certain prisoners go if the Israelis would get them out. The Israelis often went in the middle of the night to the prisons, took the released Jews to the airport, and got them out of the country. "They rescued several hundred Jewish prisoners this way," the JTA was told.

(Tomorrow: Part Two)