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SHAMIR DENOUNCES 'LAND FOR PEACE' IN SPEECH TO U.S. JEWISH LEADERS

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, April 4 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir arrived here Tuesday and bluntly defended his opposition to giving up more land for peace.

"No Arab ruler has ever been asked to give territory for peace," the prime minister said in a speech prepared for delivery to an audience of American Jewish leaders Tuesday night.

Shamir did not go into the proposals he expected to take to Washington Wednesday for his meetings with the Bush administration, except to say, "We believe the Palestinian Arabs should have self-rule, the maximum that is compatible with our security."

The prime minister is expected to propose elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which Palestinians would select representatives to negotiate an autonomy arrangement with Israel.

Shamir also did not address remarks Monday by President Bush, who told visiting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Egypt and the United States "share the goals of security for Israel, an end of the occupation and achievement of Palestinian political rights."

Instead, Shamir focused on threats to Israeli security, including "the fanatic terrorism which originates in our region." He reiterated his pledge never to enter into negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Denouncing the land-for-peace formula, Shamir pointed out that Israel had already given up the Sinai desert in exchange for peace with Egypt.

'Horrors Of Beirut' In Jerusalem

"But the Sinai desert is not Judea-Samaria and Gaza," he said. "Withdrawing from these populated areas means bringing the horrors of Beirut to the vicinity of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. It means giving Arab armies access to the hills of Judea and Samaria, which dominate our country. It means putting Israel in greater jeopardy than that of June 1967."

"Above all, these areas, unlike the Sinai, are part of Eretz Yisrael," he said. "We have a 3,000-year claim on them."

But in somewhat of a departure, Shamir acknowledged that the Palestinian Arabs also say they have a claim to the territories and that they have a "right to put their claim against ours."

"That is what negotiations are for," he said. "We shall present our claim and they will present theirs and we shall reach a settlement. It will not completely satisfy either side, but we shall be able to live with it."

Shamir's speech began with a reference to last month's Jewish solidarity conference in Israel, during which Diaspora Jewish leaders showed him "how important it is for us to be united, to speak as one people."

Jewish leaders in New York attempted to put together a similar show of unity Tuesday, but their effort was challenged by a number of critics of Shamir's policies.

Some 200 supporters of the prime minister showed up at Kennedy Airport at 6:30 a.m. Tues-

day to welcome him as he stepped from his airplane. The rally was organized by the local Zionist Organization of America chapter.

Unity Vs. Diversity

Shamir's aides were gearing for a rousing reception for the prime minister this evening at Town Hall, a large auditorium in midtown, where Shamir was to deliver his speech. That event was co-sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and New York's Jewish Community Relations Council.

Like appearances last year in Brooklyn and Miami, the opening event of Shamir's U.S. visit was to be a carefully controlled affair meant to enhance Shamir's standing before his talks in Washington. He was not expected to field questions from the invitations-only audience or press.

Organizers were prepared for charges that the event would be an endorsement of Shamir's policies. So, they arranged to have his speech followed by a reading of the solidarity conference's declaration of unity.

Reading the statement was meant to indicate that "the Jewish community as a whole has established a fundamental base of support for Israel, despite the fact that we disagree on a number of important issues," said Michael Miller, executive director of the New York JCRC.

That same tack was taken in a full-page advertisement in Tuesday's New York Times, placed by B'nai B'rith International.

"There may be differences among us, just as there are differences among Israelis, on how best to deal with the intifada and on the most effective way to find peace," the ad says. "Our strength as a community lies not in our sameness, but in our diversity -- and our unity."

Some other organizations, however, felt that Tuesday evening's meeting would sacrifice diversity for the sake of unity.

Newspaper Ads And Rallies

Mark Gold, president of Americans for Progressive Israel, said representatives of his organizations would not be attending the meeting because it would "misrepresent us as expressing support for Shamir's policies."

Gold, who said Shamir's "woefully inadequate" policies could lead to a breach in U.S.-Israel relations, called the event a "political show being used to influence voter opinion at home."

Also objecting to expressions of Jewish solidarity with the prime minister were 180 signers of an ad slated to appear in Wednesday's New York Times.

"No, Mr. Shamir," reads the ad. "Don't assume that American Jews support your policies toward the Palestinians."

The ad was sponsored by Tikkun, a progressive Jewish magazine, and signed by, among others, Tikkun editor Michael Lerner, television producer Norman Lear, playwright Arthur Miller, and writers Philip Roth, Betty Friedan and Irving Howe.

It urges negotiations with the PLO and an end to the "continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza." It concludes by telling Shamir that "you do not have a blank check for American Jewry to continue these policies."

NEWS ANALYSIS: PRESSURE ON SHAMIR IS RISING, BUT U.S. POLICY IS UNCHANGED By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 4 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir arrives in Washington Wednesday under increasing pressure from the Bush administration to provide new ideas for solving the problem of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

President Bush, who is to meet with Shamir on Thursday, was seen as increasing the heat on the prime minister when he said Monday that "Egypt and the United States share the goals of security for Israel, the end of the occupation and the achievement of Palestinian political rights."

Although the United States has always called the West Bank and Gaza Strip "occupied territories" and urged the need for Israeli withdrawal in return for peace, this was the first time it had bluntly called for an "end to the occupation."

But, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler denied Tuesday that Bush's comment signaled a change in U.S. policy. "There is not a change in our policy," she said.

And John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, told a group of Orthodox Jewish leaders Tuesday afternoon that Bush's statement was not "an attempt to define a new position."

"It was a statement of what, I believe, he feels has been a consistent position of this country, predicated on a strong commitment to the security of the State of Israel," he told the Orthodox Jewish Political Coalition at a White House briefing.

A senior administration official, who gave reporters an advance briefing Tuesday on the Shamir visit, said the Bush phrase should be seen in "the context of negotiations" which would have to happen before the occupation was ended.

Shamir Keeping Ideas Secret

Shamir, who arrived in New York Tuesday, is keeping the new ideas that he pledged to bring to Washington a closely guarded secret. He refused to present his proposals to the Israeli Cabinet, though he did inform Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, Finance Minister Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But in an interview with The New York Times last Friday, Shamir said he would propose holding elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to allow the Palestinians to choose their own leaders for negotiations with Israel.

He stressed, however, that elections would be held only if the Arabs end their uprising in the territories.

The senior administration official who briefed reporters Tuesday said that he has read all the newspaper stories, but would not comment until Shamir has outlined his ideas to Bush.

"We want to listen to what Prime Minister Shamir has to say about how the peace process can move forward," he said.

The Bush administration has appeared to be favorable to encouraging negotiations between Israel and Palestinians living in the territories.

There are indications that the administration has pressed the Palestine Liberation Organization to allow Palestinians in the territories to negotiate directly with Israeli authorities.

But visiting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told Bush on Monday that the Palestinians would never accept elections under Israeli super-

vision. When Bush asked about supervision by someone else, Mubarak reportedly suggested the United Nations.

Mubarak also told Bush that PLO leader Yasir Arafat could not end the uprising in the territories, even if he wanted to do so.

The administration has been urging both Israel and the PLO to ease tension in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to create an environment that could lead to negotiations.

"We need to foster an environment more conducive to dialogue and negotiations, and we will be especially interested in the prime minister's thoughts on these matters," the official said Tuesday.

No Change On Peace Conference

In his talks with Mubarak, which included 30 minutes of private discussions, the president also did not indicate any change in the U.S. position toward an international conference, despite some press reports to the contrary.

Mubarak came to Washington after talks with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, King Hussein of Jordan and Arafat, in which he reportedly promised to press for an early scheduling of an international conference.

In his Rose Garden remarks, Mubarak agreed with Bush that a peace agreement could only be reached through direct negotiations, but said that should be "within the framework of the international peace conference."

Bush would only say that "a properly structured international conference can find a useful role at the appropriate time."

A senior administration official later said that this was a reaffirmation of the U.S. policy that there is "a lot of ground that has to be covered" before an international conference could be considered.

The Bush administration has followed the Reagan administration position that such a conference must facilitate direct negotiations, and not be a substitute for it, and that it not just be a forum for the exercise of propaganda.

But the major stumbling block has always been who participates in the conference.

"Israel is a close friend, a reliable partner and staunch ally," the official stressed. "The U.S. commitment to Israel's security and well-being is strong and unwavering. There should be no question about that."

ISRAEL TO RELEASE ARAB PRISONERS AS SHAMIR MEETS IN WASHINGTON

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- Israel will release several hundred Palestinian prisoners on Wednesday, just hours before Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's meeting with Secretary of State James Baker in Washington.

This was confirmed here Tuesday night by official sources after speculative reports began appearing in the media.

The sources said the releases would nominally be linked to the Moslem holy month of Ramadan, which begins at the end of this week.

But they are likely to be interpreted this time as an important Israeli gesture to ease conditions in the territories on the eve of Shamir's talks with the Bush administration.

The sources said they expect up to 300 people to be released, the number embracing both administrative detainees and convicted prisoners.

SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION CLIMBS TO HIGHEST LEVEL IN 10 YEARS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 4 (JTA) -- The highest monthly total of Jews in nearly a decade emigrated from the Soviet Union in March, according to figures provided Tuesday by Soviet Jewry groups.

In Washington, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews reported that 4,240 Jews emigrated on Israeli visas last month. Of these, 462, or 10.9 percent, went to Israel -- 347 on direct flights from Bucharest and 115 by way of Vienna.

The remaining 3,778 emigrating Jews left for Rome to be processed for immigration to other countries, most to the United States, some to Canada and a handful to Australia.

The National Conference on Soviet Jewry did not provide specific numbers, but said that "slightly more than 4,000 Jews left the Soviet Union in March."

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society reported slightly higher figures than the Union of Councils, saying that 460 had gone to Israel and 3,783 had stayed in Vienna in the hope of immigrating to other countries. This would bring the total for the month to 4,343 Soviet Jews.

In any case, the number of Jews who left in March is the highest monthly total since October 1979. The March figure also represents a 75 percent increase over February's total. And it reverses a steady decline in emigration since the December high of 3,652.

Meanwhile, the number of Soviet Jews waiting in Rome for permission to emigrate to the United States and other countries is climbing rapidly. As of March 31, HIAS had a caseload of 8,050 Jews stranded there. Most are being housed in the nearby seaside town of Ladispoli.

Medical Leave For Refusenik

In other Soviet Jewry news, ailing long-term refusenik Georgi Samoilovich has received permission to travel to London for medical treatment, the Union of Councils reported.

The Soviet government also has lifted Samoilovich's "secrecy" classification, which prevented him from emigrating on the grounds that he allegedly possessed state secrets.

Samoilovich, who received a telephone call from the OVIR emigration authorities, was told that he could pick up his travel visa Wednesday.

A prominent cultural activist, Samoilovich reportedly suffers from large-cell lymphoma.

The Union of Councils pointed out that the decision on the Samoilovich case coincides with meetings to take place later this week in London between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

"This is a further example of the importance of keeping the spotlight on refusenik cases and on Soviet violations of the human rights agreements they have signed," Pamela Cohen, president of the Union of Councils, said from her Chicago office.

"For almost nine months, Samoilovich has had pending invitations from both the Hackensack Medical Center in New Jersey and the Royal Marsden Hospital in London for treatment. We can only hope that it's not too late to still save his life," she said.

Since August 1988, when the Soviets denied Samoilovich an emergency visa to travel to the West for treatment, there has been an intensive international campaign to save his life.

JEWISH AGENCY MAY RETAIN ROLE IN PROVIDING ABSORPTION SERVICES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 4 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency for Israel is reconsidering its decision to transfer absorption services to the government, alleging that government agencies are not making a serious effort to prepare for an expected mass influx of Soviet immigrants.

"All options are now open for the agency," including taking full responsibility for absorption, Simcha Dinitz told the annual conference of the British Settlers Association on Sunday. Dinitz chairs the World Zionist Organization-Jewish Agency Executive.

"When the agency agreed to transfer absorption services to the government by April 1990, our intentions were sincere," he said. "The decision was taken out of a desire to improve services and eliminate duplication."

"Since the government has not yet shown that it is ready to take responsibility, the agency is reconsidering its decision," he said.

The association of former Soviet prisoners of Zion in Israel called a news conference in Tel Aviv on Tuesday morning to castigate both the government and the Jewish Agency for what it termed failures to deal correctly with immigrant absorption.

The former Soviet prisoners demanded from both bodies what they termed an "organizational earthquake" in absorption procedures, in view of the massive wave of immigration foreseen from the Soviet Union.

Problems Finding Housing

Last week, Deputy Foreign Minister Binyamin Netanyahu predicted that "hundreds of thousands" of Soviet Jews could immigrate to Israel within the next few years.

Soviet Jewry activists in the United States say 40,000 Jews could leave the Soviet Union this year alone, meaning that about 4,000 would go to Israel, if current emigration trends remain constant.

The former prisoners said the government is not doing enough to prepare for such an immigration flood and that services provided to immigrants already in Israel are inadequate.

The recent decision to close absorption centers and instead provide subsidies for housing has left many newcomers with no suitable housing, the ex-prisoners charged.

They said some immigrants were forced to look for apartments after only a few days in Israel, having little knowledge of Hebrew with which to negotiate deals with apartment owners or builders.

They also said that many new immigrants could not find work, and they complained of "rude and humiliating treatment" at the hands of Jewish Agency officials.

They demanded that all absorption centers be reopened and that new ones be built, if necessary. They welcomed Dinitz's statement that the agency was considering amending its decision to hand absorption matters over to the government.

"Bad absorption is killing immigration," the spokesmen said.

A survey of immigrants in absorption centers conducted recently by the Absorption Ministry showed that only 10 percent of the 2,500 households there need subsidized housing. An earlier survey found half the immigrants need housing.

GROUPS OPPOSING ABORTION LAW, BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, April 4 (JTA) -- Basing their arguments on Jewish law and tradition, both Orthodox and nondenominational Jewish groups have filed legal briefs urging the Supreme Court to strike down a Missouri law that in effect bans abortion.

But the unity among the groups is not as complete as it appears. Despite their opposition to aspects of the Missouri law, one of the Orthodox groups, Agudath Israel of America, is nonetheless urging the high court to overturn the 1973 ruling that established women's right to abortions as a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution.

Agudath Israel differs from the other Jewish groups, including the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, which hold that the decision to terminate a pregnancy, whatever the reason, is something for individuals, not the government, to decide.

The arguments surround a case called William L. Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services, soon to be heard by the Supreme Court.

The Missouri statutes restrict abortion by denying public funds and facilities for the purpose of performing or counseling about abortions, and include a "finding" that human life begins at the moment of conception.

Missouri is appealing the decisions of a lower court, which found most of the statutes unconstitutional.

In addition, the state is asking the Supreme Court to overturn the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, which established a constitutional right to obtain an abortion.

Interfaith Brief

Abortion rights advocates consider the case the most serious recent challenge to Roe vs. Wade, and are organizing a mass demonstration in Washington on Sunday. A number of Jewish organizations are planning to take part.

Jewish groups also joined major Protestant and interfaith organizations in signing onto a legal brief asking that the Missouri laws be struck down. Coordinated by the American Jewish Congress and written by Harvard Law School Professor Martha Minow, the brief urges the laws be struck down for two main reasons.

It argues that by finding that human life begins at conception, the statutes establish a religious viewpoint as law, thereby violating the establishment clause of the First Amendment, which bars government establishment of religion.

The brief offers arguments from Jewish tradition that a total ban on abortion would violate the free exercise of religion.

Jewish law, the brief notes, actually makes abortion a requirement if the fetus endangers the mother's life.

The brief contains statements representing the viewpoints of all branches of Judaism, including a statement by the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council that "the Jewish community shares with others the reverence for life, on the one hand, and the pluralistic society's concern for individual rights and religious liberty."

According to a source at the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, or O.U., it was NJCRAC's sensitivity to Orthodox beliefs that convinced O.U. leaders to sign onto the brief.

"We believe that every effort should be made to create a society in which people will willingly choose to bring children into the world," said the source, who described the O.U. as an umbrella organization representing "centrist" Orthodoxy.

But the source said the O.U. also believes that when people choose not to proceed with pregnancies, "for reasons mandated by conscience and religious convictions, this feeling must be respected as well."

Agudath Israel agrees with parts of the intergroup brief. In its own brief it asks that the finding on conception be struck down as a violation of the establishment clause. It also concurs that Jewish law requires abortion in cases where the mother's life is endangered.

Still, Agudath Israel believes there is a middle ground between the "permissiveness" of Roe vs. Wade, which deems the choice to abort a "fundamental" constitutional right, and the strict restrictions of the Missouri statutes.

"At a minimum it's not necessary to create a law that is totally permissive," said David Zwiebel, Agudath Israel's general counsel and author of the brief. "Constitutionally there's a very easy way: You define abortion as a fundamental right only if it involves danger to life or if religion would mandate it."

The Jewish groups signing onto the interfaith brief are the American Jewish Committee, AJCongress, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith Women, Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, Na'amat, National Council of Jewish Women, National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, NJCRAC, North American Federation of Temple Youth and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

ISRAEL HIGH COURT CONSIDERS NEW EVIDENCE FOR DEMJANJUK

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, April 4 (JTA) -- The High Court of Justice will meet next week to consider admitting new documents that would reopen the trial against convicted war criminal John "Ivan the Terrible" Demjanjuk.

Five justices met Monday after Demjanjuk's defense attorney, Yoram Sheftel, had asked the Supreme Court to reopen the case, claiming new evidence would show bias against the three-judge panel that found Demjanjuk guilty.

If the new evidence is accepted, it is likely to be considered in Demjanjuk's appeal of his death sentence, which is now scheduled to be made on Nov. 1.

Sheftel has based his request upon the question as to when it became publicly known that Sobibor, near Treblinka, was also a death camp.

The trial judges noted in their verdict that Sobibor was unknown until 1948, but Sheftel quotes articles from both Hebrew newspapers and The New York Times that mention the camp as early as February 1944.

Sobibor is important for the state prosecution because of the so-called Trawniki identity card, which showed that he was trained to be an SS guard.

Sheftel wrote in his plea to the five justices that "this discrepancy illustrates the extreme lack of caution that characterized the court in making a far-reaching conclusion to the detriment of the appellant."