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PRO-ISRAEL SENATOR IS THE LATEST TO BACK INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- A leading pro-Israel senator this week urged President Bush to consider the idea of hosting an international conference with the Soviet Union whose purpose would be to achieve a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) made the suggestion to Bush during a meeting Wednesday at the White House. Also attending the meeting was Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.).

In Jerusalem, the Foreign Ministry's immediate reaction Thursday was to declare that Israel would prefer to negotiate directly with each of the Arab states and is ready to start such negotiations immediately, without any preconditions.

The international conference idea, which Israel has long opposed and the Arab states have repeatedly supported, has gained new currency recently, as the prospects for bringing about direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have dimmed.

Several European nations have long backed the idea of convening an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations. What has changed is that staunch supporters of Israel are now warming to the idea as well.

Triggered By Assad Visit

What may have stimulated reconsideration of the idea of an international conference this week was Syrian President Hafez Assad's visit to Egypt, his first in more than a decade.

Speaking Sunday night at a news conference in Alexandria, Assad said he was ready to enter the peace process "under certain conditions," one of which was an international conference.

But Specter's proposal for an international conference is somewhat different than that long advocated by the Arab states. His plan calls for the United States and the Soviet Union only to facilitate the meeting, Dan McKenna, the senator's press secretary, explained Thursday.

Israel and the Arab countries would negotiate their own agreements, he added.

Specter was not seeking to put pressure on Israel, but to find a way to "defuse" the current tense situation in the Middle East, McKenna said.

That is why the Specter proposal does not include the other three permanent members of the Security Council: Britain, France and China, McKenna said. He said the senator felt these countries might take more anti-Israel positions.

The Bush administration, while not ruling out an international conference, has opposed it because it does not believe such a conference could work at this time.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said Wednesday that the United States "remains committed to moving forward to a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians."

Shamir has adamantly opposed an international conference under U.N. auspices. But he has been quoted in the past as saying he would consider a conference under U.S.-Soviet auspices.

(JTA correspondent Gil Sedan in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

ISRAEL SAYS IT HAS NO OBJECTION TO E.C. OFFICE IN THE TERRITORIES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- Israel will not object to European Community plans to set up an office in East Jerusalem to monitor E.C. aid programs in the administered territories, Foreign Ministry officials said this week.

Israel's position toward the E.C. decision was clarified in what was seen as a conciliatory gesture in advance of the visit here Monday by an E.C. delegation. It will be led by the current president of the E.C. Council of Ministers, Gianni de Michelis of Italy, and also will include the foreign ministers of Ireland and Luxembourg.

The three are to meet with President Chaim Herzog and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, as well as to hold working meetings with Foreign Minister David Levy and his aides.

The Israeli clarification regarding E.C. representation in the territories followed earlier indications that Israel would balk at the idea because of its political implications.

Foreign Ministry officials now say there will be no objections, provided the proposed office confines itself to humanitarian matters.

Levy himself, in a television appearance Wednesday, sought to assuage a common belief that he would take a tough position toward the Palestinian uprising and criteria for choosing a Palestinian delegation to negotiate with Israel.

Pronouncing himself "a pragmatist and a moderate," Levy said his purpose was to defend Israeli vital interests while at the same time seeking common ground both with the United States and with Israel's friends in Europe.

ISRAEL DEFENSE MINISTER ARENS TO VISIT WASHINGTON FOR TALKS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Moshe Arens was due to leave for Washington to meet with Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney on Friday in the first high-level U.S.-Israeli discussion since the new Israeli government was formed in June.

Arens had asked for the meeting with his American counterpart after he became defense minister last month.

During his scheduled three-day stay, Arens is expected to discuss "all security issues concerning relations between the two countries," a Defense Ministry statement said.

The two will also discuss the Arrow anti-ballistic missile project, defense officials said.

Arens will also come to New York, where he will take part Sunday in a small meeting with Jewish leaders, according to Malcolm Hoelnlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, speaking to Israel Television reporters, said Thursday there was no logical reason for Jordanian King Hussein's current dark, foreboding mood.

Hussein recently charged that Israel has been making illegal use of Arab rights to the region's water, hinting that this could lead to an outbreak of war.

Hussein also appeared on the ABC television program "Nightline" and spoke pessimistically about the influx of Soviet immigrants, which he said would impact negatively on the region.

Shamir also said Syrian President Hafez Assad's statements earlier this week in Egypt, heralded in the word media as a softening of his position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, had stopped short of a "breakthrough" but did represent a change of "tone."

Shamir said Assad was apparently responding to his own suggestion, voiced several weeks ago, that Israel and Syria negotiate without preconditions. "Only he is putting up preconditions," Shamir said.

(JTA staff writer Allison Kaplan in New York contributed to this report.)

SAUDIS TO SEEK ADDITIONAL \$2 BILLION WORTH OF TANKS By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, July 19 (JTA) -- Saudi Arabia is seeking to buy \$2 billion worth of M-1A2 tanks beyond the 315 the United States agreed to sell the kingdom last year, the U.S. company that makes the tanks said Thursday.

Donald Gilleland, spokesman for General Dynamics' Land Systems Division in Sterling Heights, Mich., said rumors to that effect are "correct," and that the Saudis are seeking 385 additional tanks, for a total of 700.

"It is a discussion ongoing between the two governments, but we understand that the Saudi Arabian government is interested in another 385 M-1A2s," Gilleland said.

Saudi Arabia's embassy declined to comment. Speculation about the possibility of such a sale, worth \$2 billion, comes a week after the Saudis concluded the earlier deal of tanks and other weaponry, worth \$3.1 billion, which sailed through Congress last fall without opposition.

Also, it comes a week after Congress declined to block a \$4 billion sale to the Saudis of 2,000 TOW anti-tank missiles, 1,117 light armored vehicles, upgrades for AWACS reconnaissance planes and other weaponry.

Pro-Israel groups did not fight either the \$3.1 billion or \$4 billion sales, on the rationale that none of the weaponry directly threatens Israel's security.

But they may be more active next year, when Saudi Arabia is expected to seek to upgrade its aging air force with U.S. F-15 fighter planes made by McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Co. of St. Louis, or F-16s made by General Dynamics' Fort Worth, Texas, division.

IDF TO DEMOTE OR TRANSFER 8 OFFICERS FOLLOWING REPORT ON TRAINING DEATHS By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 19 (JTA) -- The top Israel Defense Force brass has accepted the recommendations of a special commission of inquiry that advises the demotion or transfer to other posts of eight army commissioned and reserve officers.

The move follows the accidental deaths Tuesday of five soldiers and the wounding of 10 others in a training exercise Tuesday.

The report echoed the personal observations of Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy, head of the IDF Ground Forces Command, under whose auspices the war games were being held, that the deaths were the result of human error.

The soldiers were killed when a 155mm artillery shell fired from a distance of some seven miles slammed into an infantry unit that had just succeeded in a simulated capture of a hilltop. The "softening-up shell" was supposed to have been directed at their next target, which was located less than a mile away.

The eight men disciplined or transferred, who range in rank from lieutenant colonel to lieutenant, were found guilty in varying degrees of dereliction of duty in the chain of supervision, safety and rechecking functions preliminary to opening fire.

A reserve captain serving as a battalion artillery liaison officer had admitted, immediately following the incident, that he had given the wrong code name for the target.

Last Two Soldiers Buried

The inquiry commission, headed by reserve Maj. Gen. Amos Yaron, ruled that the other officers bore equal responsibility for their failure to draw attention to the mistaken order before it was executed.

Standing IDF orders decree that a chain of supervisors and safety officers monitor the open-fire orders. None of that chain picked up on the mistake, according to the report.

The IDF Military Police investigation unit will be called on to consider whether criminal charges should be leveled against those found to be derelict in their duty.

The last two of the five soldiers killed in the accident were buried Thursday. They were identified as Sgt. Maj. Yosef Berniker, 35, of Kibbutz Geshur Haziv, and Staff Sgt. Shimon Biton, 22, of Jerusalem. Berniker immigrated to Israel in 1974 from New Orleans.

Six of the 10 injured soldiers are still in the hospital. Four were sent home after treatment.

IDF COMPLETING TESTS OF NEW BULLET By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 19 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force is now completing its operational testing of a new type of bullet -- made of sand -- that is meant to be fired from very close range without posing any danger.

Commanders and soldiers have reportedly given positive opinions of the new bullet, which is expected to be put into service shortly.

The sand bullet is a small round bag filled with sand. Each shot contains three such bags that are fired from a special rifle.

The sand bullet can be fired from distances of around 130 feet or less. It hits hard and painfully but does not enter the body and is not fatal.

The bullet's first tests, conducted a few weeks ago, were unsuccessful, Ma'ariv reported Thursday. In the second round of tests, the bullets have reportedly been improved.

The IDF has received severe criticism over previous bullets, particularly those rubber and plastic bullets used against Palestinian demonstrators in the territories. Bullets that had been declared safe have caused fatalities.

The sand bullet was developed after it became clear that the IDF did not have the means to strike at short range, in clashes with rock-throwers and rioters.

Meanwhile, a new rubber bullet, less dangerous than its predecessor, is now in use in the administered territories.

TWO EUROPEAN PRESIDENTS TO MEET WITH WALDHEIM

By David Kantor

BONN, July 19 (JTA) -- West German President Richard von Weizsacker and Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel will meet next week with President Kurt Waldheim of Austria, who has been largely isolated by democratic leaders since his election some three years ago.

Von Weizsacker's office in Bonn confirmed Wednesday that the meeting, which is strictly private, will take place in Salzburg.

It was not immediately clear here why von Weizsacker decided to enhance Waldheim's political stature and reputation by breaking the unofficial international boycott against him.

Waldheim has been accused by Jewish groups of lying about his Nazi past as a German army officer in the Balkans during World War II, at the time that deportations and reprisal killings were taking place against Jews and partisans.

REVISIONIST HISTORIAN SUSPENDED FOR ONE YEAR FROM LYON UNIVERSITY

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, July 19 (JTA) -- Bernard Notin, a senior lecturer at Lyon University, was suspended Wednesday from all his academic activities for one year for anti-Semitic slurs and casting doubt on the existence of the Holocaust and gas chambers.

The university's disciplinary commission had been called to rule on Notin's continued academic work after he had denied the existence of the Holocaust. In an article published in January, he claimed the gas chambers had never existed and were merely "a figment of popular imagination without any historic basis."

In April, Lyon Mayor Michel Noir called on the commission to take disciplinary action against Notin, warning that unless he was dismissed, the city would end its financial support of the university. The sum involved was believed to run into several million dollars per year.

Noir, a member of Jacques Chirac's center-right Rally for the Republic, also warned that if "Notin and other forgers were permitted to go on teaching," the city would not hand over, as previously agreed, new buildings for the university campus.

On July 11, a Paris court found Notin guilty of slander and ordered him to pay a \$4,000 fine to an anti-racist organization, the Movement Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, that had brought the charges against him on the basis of the January article, which was published in a sociological journal edited by the university.

The court, in its ruling, said the historian had caused "serious and needless pain to former deportees and their families and especially to the Jewish community."

KOHL BACKS STATEMENT ON NAZIS

By David Kantor

BONN, July 19 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany said Wednesday that he would support a suggestion of the country's Jewish community to include a declaration on Germany's Nazi past in a preamble to a treaty on Germany's reunification.

The chancellor's spokesman, Hans Klein, said the declaration will underline united Germany's responsibility for its Nazi past.

VANDALIZED SYNAGOGUE IN CANADA ANOTHER SIGN OF RISE IN NEO-NAZISM

By Cassandra Freeman

TORONTO, July 19 (JTA) -- The desecration of a Hamilton synagogue a week ago was most likely the work of an individual involved with a racist Skinhead group, a human rights activist says, and is just the latest indication of an upsurge in white supremacist activity in Canada.

The neo-Nazi slogans and symbols painted on the Beth Jacob synagogue July 8 were the latest of five "severe incidents of this nature" involving Jewish institutions across Canada since January, said Lorne Shipman, the Ontario director of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada.

The desecration came on the heels of a white supremacist rally in Metcalfe, Ontario, two weeks ago.

Police are now looking into whether any of the 250 people who attended the rally live in or near Hamilton, Shipman said.

"There's certainly a correlation between the rise of racist Skinheads and the rise of severe incidents in Canada, without a doubt," he said.

Shipman said that in order to prevent synagogue desecrations from getting out of hand, it is important to publicize them, both in order to gain community support and to isolate the racist element.

"Silence is not an effective tool, silence gives tacit approval to the racist," Shipman said.

But when the public is informed and non-Jewish leaders speak out against the vandalism, they promote anti-racism within their community and send out a clear signal that vandalism will not be tolerated amongst their members, Shipman said.

LONDON AREAS BLITZED BY SHOW OF ANTI-SEMITISM

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, July 19 (JTA) -- Areas in and around London have been pummeled with anti-Semitic manifestations, and police and public officials have gotten involved in efforts to find the guilty parties.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has criticized authorities for failing up till now to prosecute anyone for anti-Semitic writings.

A member of Parliament has asked for public support to help track down the perpetrators of an anti-Semitic graffiti campaign being waged in Rickmansworth, immediately northwest of London.

Richard Page, a member of Parliament for southwest Hertfordshire, is urging "members of the general public to keep a look out for those who are undertaking the offenses, and to report it to the police as soon as they are able."

For the past two months, slogans such as "Kill the Jews" have been daubed on walls and fences in the area.

The words "Dirty Jews" were painted in huge letters on the wall outside the Rickmansworth Masonic School, which has a small number of Jewish students.

As soon as the property owners and local council remove the offending graffiti, they reappear in the same places.

Meanwhile, a vicious anti-Semitic hate leaflet which claims that Christians are the target of Jewish animosity has been circulated in the fabled town of Canterbury, some 50 miles south-east of London.

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN L.A. MEET TO DISCUSS RACISM CHARGE

By Leo Noonan

Jewish Journal of Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, July 19 (JTA) -- The leaders of four major Jewish organizations huddled here this week on the issue of Jews and blacks in Hollywood, then declared that they are willing to meet with "responsible" black leadership to discuss a specific agenda that would not include alleged "Jewish racism" toward blacks.

The Jewish leaders, who met for an hour at the offices of the American Jewish Committee on Tuesday, were David Lehrer, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; Rabbi Laura Geller, of the American Jewish Congress; Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, of the AJCommittee; and Steven Windmueller, of the local Jewish Community Relations Committee.

The four said they would prefer to talk with leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and they did not mention any others by name.

All emphatically stated that they will not enter into talks with black leaders if Legrand Clegg, who ignited the controversy last week, is included.

Clegg, the Compton, Calif., city attorney, charged at the NAACP national convention here that black entertainers are being held back by "century-old Jewish racism in Hollywood."

He challenged Jewish leaders to a summit meeting to examine, in the company of blacks, his accusations "in the same spirit" that Jews have called summits to discuss anti-Semitic statements by black leaders such as Louis Farrakhan and Nelson Mandela.

Dismissed As Anti-Semitic

Lehrer dismissed Clegg as an anti-Semite "who heads a paper organization (the Coalition Against Black Exploitation) and has been making these kinds of charges for years." The other three organizational leaders appeared to support Lehrer's characterizations.

They agreed, however, that blacks probably have been deprived of rightful opportunities in Hollywood, although it was not the fault of "Jews in visible positions -- Jews are not to blame," Windmueller said.

So then why should Jews and blacks even meet?

"We want to make sure Los Angeles does not become yet another center of dangerous tensions between blacks and Jews," said Windmueller.

"We want to make sure the lines of communications are kept open so that when these occasional flare-ups happen, we can sit down and reasonably discuss them."

But the leaders were adamant in declaring that the matter of "black entertainers being held down" would be "more properly addressed to Sony, Lorimar, MGM and other Hollywood studio honors -- 6505 Wilshire (home of the Jewish Federation Council) is not the appropriate address."

Geller, of AJCongress, said that "it is up to the black community to make the next move. Perhaps we (AJCongress) will extend an invitation to meet, but the ball is in their court."

She said that all agreed that Clegg's charges of Jewish racism in Hollywood are anti-Semitic, and "should not be responded to or dignified."

ISRAEL ACTIVIST IN L.A. SENTENCED FOR FEDERAL ELECTION LAWS VIOLATION

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, July 19 (JTA) -- Michael Goland, a maverick pro-Israel activist, has been sentenced to three months in a "jail-like facility" for violating federal election laws to ensure the 1986 re-election of U.S. Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), one of Israel's staunchest congressional supporters.

Goland, 43, had been convicted by a federal jury on one misdemeanor count for making an illegal political donation. The jury acquitted him on four felony counts of conspiracy and making false statements.

U.S. District Judge Ronald Lew also ordered Goland to perform 1,000 hours of community service. Prison sentences for misdemeanor violations of political donation laws are rarely given but Lew said that he meant to make an example of Goland to deter others from such offenses.

Lew initially ordered Goland to report for incarceration on Aug. 31 but postponed the date for 45 days to allow Goland's attorney, Seth Waxman, to appeal the sentence. The judge's reference to a "jail-like facility" might mean that Goland, should the appeal fail, would serve time in a federal conservation camp or other halfway house-type institution.

According to court testimony in the case, Goland secretly and illegally funneled \$120,000 to a fringe right-wing candidate in the 1986 senatorial race in California.

The alleged aim was to siphon enough Conservative votes away from the Republican contender, Ed Zschau, to assure the victory of Cranston, a Democrat. In fact, the fringe candidate took away just enough votes from Zschau to clinch Cranston's election.

There is no evidence that Cranston was involved in Goland's effort on his behalf.

Waxman, speaking by phone from his office in Washington, said that in a pre-sentencing memorandum, Goland admitted that he had made a mistake in not notifying the Federal Election Commission of the \$120,000 donation, and that he deeply regretted the grief that the matter had caused his family and friends.

Last year, Goland was tried on the same charges, but the trial ended in a hung jury.

JEWISH AGENCY SETS UP INFO CENTER FOR POTENTIAL OLIM IN SOVIET UNION

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 19 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency, together with the help of Bezek, the national telephone company, have set up a new information center to provide potential immigrants in the Soviet Union with information by phone on immigration and absorption in Israel.

The agency's Immigration and Absorption Department has been operating Telegesh, meaning "Telebridge," for the past two months. More than 5,000 people have gathered in 60 meetings throughout the Soviet Union, raising questions and receiving immediate answers from various experts on what awaits them in Israel.

The sessions were recorded, and audio cassettes were disseminated within the Jewish communities.

The Jewish Agency now plans to operate the service on a regular weekly basis, including to remote Jewish communities.