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SMARTING FROM ARENS-BUSH SESSION, LEVY CANCELS MEETING WITH BAKER

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The deepening rivalry between two senior Cabinet ministers unexpectedly ruffled Israel's increasingly smooth relations with the United States on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister David Levy abruptly canceled a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker, scheduled Friday in Washington.

Levy made clear that he felt his foreign policy turf was being usurped by Defense Minister Moshe Arens, who met with Baker Monday evening after meetings earlier in the day with President Bush and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.

Levy's pique was evident from the terse statement his office issued explaining why the foreign minister "postponed" his meeting with Baker.

"In view of the meetings held by the defense minister with President Bush, Secretary Cheney and Secretary Baker, the foreign minister thinks he should first learn the subjects discussed in the meetings as well as the understandings and conclusions reached," the statement said.

Arens, who returned to Israel on Tuesday, said he did not discuss any diplomatic issues with the secretary of state. He met with Levy on Tuesday evening to brief him on his discussions with the Bush administration.

In Washington, the State Department expressed surprise at the cancellation. Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said she could offer no reason why Levy canceled a meeting that he had requested in the first place.

Shamir Surprised By Move

She said Arens had limited himself to areas within his defense portfolio and that Baker and he had engaged in only a "general discussion."

Another State Department official said he did not think Baker was "trying to do an end run around Levy."

Levy reportedly had been assured when Arens decided to go to Washington just four days before him that he would meet only with Cheney on political matters and would not deal with the political aspects of the Persian Gulf war.

Foreign Ministry sources said Levy was notified of Arens' meeting with Bush at the White House only three hours before it was held and that he learned of Arens' meeting with Baker from the political correspondent of Ha'aretz.

The foreign minister was not notified that Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir gave Arens a message to convey to Bush nor apparently did Shamir apprise Levy of its contents when the two met Monday.

Ha'aretz reported that the Baker-Arens meeting was arranged last month, on the second day of the Persian Gulf war, when the first Iraqi Scud missile hit Israel.

According to the newspaper, Baker telephoned Arens immediately after the attack and was assured by him that Israel would not automatically retaliate.

At that point, Baker expressed the wish to see the Israeli defense minister on his next trip to Washington, Ha'aretz said.

Shamir, meanwhile, expressed surprise at Levy's move Tuesday, which he said he learned about from a radio report. He said he hoped Levy would go to Washington as scheduled.

Arens' meeting with Baker lasted an hour, the State Department said Tuesday.

The defense minister told Baker "that he had just had a very in-depth, detailed discussion" with Cheney and that "there was no reason to go into that level of detail with Baker," Tutwiler reported.

She added that Baker had sat in on Arens' meeting with Bush earlier in the day.

Arens Interrupts To Phone Wife

Tutwiler said Arens and Baker discussed in a "general way" additional aid Israel might request from the United States. Arens informed Baker of Israel's extra defense preparedness costs during the Persian Gulf crisis, which have been estimated at \$3 billion.

They did not discuss the peace process or Israel's resumption of raids on Palestine Liberation Organization strongholds in southern Lebanon, Tutwiler said.

As was the case during the Arens-Bush meeting, news of an Iraqi missile attack on Israel reached Arens during his meeting with Baker. The defense minister excused himself from the meeting to call his wife, who lives in the area of Israel where the missile hit, Tutwiler said.

Arens and Levy, each considered a candidate for Shamir's job when the prime minister leaves office, have crossed swords before. Arens' visited Washington last September, just a few days before a planned visit by Levy.

Levy's cancellation leaves the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council without one of its keynote speakers for its annual plenum, which begins Sunday in Miami.

The plenum will feature addresses by Vice President Dan Quayle, Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval and Dennis Ross, head of the State Department's policy planning staff.

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

WAR HAS BOOSTED ISRAEL'S STANDING IN U.S. PUBLIC OPINION, POLL FINDS

NEW YORK, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- Israel's already favorable rating in American public opinion has risen significantly since the Persian Gulf war began, according to a national survey of 600 registered voters conducted this month for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The 88 percent approval of Israel in February, up from 70 percent in December, probably stems from the Israeli government's restraint in the face of Scud missile attacks from Iraq, according to Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director, who released the poll results Monday.

By a 79-19 percent margin, Americans said Israel should continue to exercise restraint. But 59 percent of those supporting restraint thought Israel should retaliate for a chemical weapon attack. Although 37 percent would support retaliation if the attacks persist for another month, 51 percent were opposed.

Despite the support for restraint however, a

majority of 53 percent believed the United States has no right to demand that Israel refrain from retaliation.

By a 46-37 percent margin, Americans thought the United States "should stand by Israel" if it retaliates against Iraq, even at the risk of Arab defections from the U.S.-led coalition.

But 51 percent believed the coalition would not break up if Israel became militarily involved in the war, compared with 37 percent who thought it would.

By a margin of 89-10 percent, the respondents were convinced the United States was "doing everything" it could to protect Israel from Iraqi missile attacks.

The telephone poll was conducted Feb. 4 and 5 by Marttila & Kiley Inc., a Boston-based public opinion research firm. The margin of error was plus or minus 4 percent.

By 60-17 percent, Americans sympathized more with Israel than with the Arab nations. In the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the sympathies of 47 percent were with the Israelis, as opposed to 28 percent for the Palestinians.

Backing For Palestinian Homeland

By a 58-20 percent margin, the respondents favored giving the Palestinians a homeland in the West Bank. But that was down from 62 percent before the Gulf war began.

Asked if they would support a Palestinian homeland if it might pose a risk to Israeli security, the response was 44-41 percent in favor.

By a 47-42 percent margin, Americans thought Israel should never negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The poll found that 64 percent of Americans believe the United States and its allies should continue fighting until Saddam Hussein is removed from power and the Iraqi military machine is broken.

That contrasted with 23 percent who thought the war should end if Iraq pulled its forces out of Kuwait.

According to the poll, 46 percent rated Israel a "close ally" of the United States, while 42 percent saw it as "friendly but not an ally."

Favorable opinions of the present Israeli government were held by 58 percent of the respondents compared with 23 percent "unfavorable" and 10 percent who had "mixed" feelings.

8 HURT IN SCUD ATTACK EARLY TUESDAY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The Iraqi Scud missile that struck central Israel early Tuesday morning injured eight people and caused extensive property damage.

Most of the injuries were minor. But two houses were damaged beyond repair, and another 180 houses or apartments sustained varying degrees of damage.

The Israel Defense Force did not disclose the area of impact, which would provide valuable information to the Iraqi launching crews.

The media described it as a rural residential area and an opulent suburb, consisting of one and two-story villas.

The missile, which struck at about 1:30 a.m. local time, was the second to hit Israel in a five-hour period. The first, fired Monday evening, landed in an uninhabited area causing neither casualties nor damage.

RULES ON ARAB WORKERS TIGHTENED, DESPITE PRESSING DEMAND FOR LABOR

By Gili Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The Israeli authorities are establishing policies that will sharply curtail the number of Palestinian day laborers employed in Israel, even after the Persian Gulf war ends.

Few of the measures are new. But the strict enforcement of regulations largely overlooked in the past has made it clear that security outweighs economic necessity.

The crackdown comes despite labor shortages, especially in the construction industry and among citrus growers, whose orchards are laden with ripe fruit but in need of hands to pick it.

One rule being tightened is the ban on Palestinians from the administered territories staying overnight in Israel proper.

Another trend that has gained momentum since the war began is to insist that Israeli employers obtain their Arab workers through the official labor exchanges.

In the past, many Arab laborers were recruited privately. They were willing to work for lower wages, and the employer avoided paying any social benefits. Now security-conscious employers are going through official channels, even though their labor costs could increase by 40 percent.

There is an additional incentive. Employment Service inspectors raided plants and workshops in the Atarot industrial park in northern Jerusalem on Tuesday to check whether all the Arab workers were documented. Dozens of unregistered workers were found. Their employers will be fined \$250 for each one, the authorities said.

Months before the Gulf war began, Palestinians in the territories were required to obtain special magnetized identification cards in order to enter Israel for any reason. The process weeded out several thousand who were classified as security risks or criminals.

Banned From Tel Aviv And Haifa

Police Minister Ronni Milo told the Knesset Interior Committee on Tuesday that from now on, only registered workers will be allowed into Israel from the territories.

Although curfews were partially lifted three days ago to facilitate the labor supply from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, no more than 5,000 Arabs reported for work in Israel on Tuesday. Before the Gulf war, the daily work force numbered about 120,000.

Police Inspector-General Ya'acov Terner told the Knesset committee Tuesday that as long as Iraqi missiles continue to be fired at Israel, residents from the territories will not be allowed into the Greater Tel Aviv or Greater Haifa areas, which have been the main targets. He said one reason is to protect Arabs from vengeful Jews.

The Justice Ministry, meanwhile, is reported to be drafting a bill that would close legal gaps that enabled Palestinians to circumvent the rule against staying overnight in Israel. The ban has existed ever since Israel captured the territories in 1967, but was only sporadically enforced.

Now the thousands of Palestinians who spend the night in Israeli urban slums are deemed a security hazard to the Jewish population and will be ousted.

Under the law being drafted, a Palestinian from the territories found in Israel between sunset and dawn would face criminal charges.

SHAMIR THANKS GERMANY FOR AID AS NATION DEBATES HELP GIVEN IRAQ

By David Kantor

BONN, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- Germany's promise of military and economic assistance to Israel has elicited thanks from Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who told Chancellor Helmut Kohl he was grateful for Bonn's aid and solidarity with the Jewish state.

A letter Shamir sent the chancellor last week was released for publication here Monday. It appeared as German authorities gave serious consideration to providing Israel with \$100 million for the purchase of Patriot anti-missile systems from the United States.

According to diplomatic sources here, the financial assistance would be in lieu of German Patriot batteries, which are designed to shoot down enemy aircraft, whereas Israel needs missiles to intercept and destroy Iraqi Scuds.

Germany has promised Israel a total of \$660 million in military and economic aid. A check for \$3.3 million was presented Monday to the Israeli ambassador, Benjamin Navon, to help repair missile damage in Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan.

German military assistance was offered by Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher during his visit to Jerusalem last month.

Genscher, in Cairo on Tuesday on another Middle East trip, reportedly told the Egyptian leadership that Bonn's military assistance to Israel was an exception arising from its historic commitment to the security and well-being of the Jewish people.

Genscher nevertheless promised generous economic help to Egypt and said Germany would make available armored reconnaissance vehicles which are capable of detecting nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. The German foreign minister will also visit Damascus and Amman.

German Firms Deny Supplying Iraq

Genscher came under fire in the Bundestag for his assertion that the Palestine Liberation Organization still has a role to play in future Middle East peace negotiations despite its support of Iraq in the Gulf war.

The criticism came from the ruling Christian Democratic Union and Genscher's own Free Democratic Party, the CDU's junior coalition partner.

The Bonn government is especially sensitive to Israel's security needs since Israel became a non-combatant target of Iraqi missiles.

German firms reportedly helped the Iraqis extend the range of their Scuds to reach Israel.

Several German industrial associations published advertisements in major newspapers Monday denying that any of their members were ever involved in supplying Iraq with material or technology for the manufacture of chemical weapons.

But many of the same newspapers published lists of well known German firms that allegedly helped the Iraqis improve their Scuds, produce poison gas or develop their nuclear capabilities.

The Jewish community, meanwhile, joined a rising chorus of protests on television and in the press over the compliance by many German firms with the Arab boycott of Israel in order to improve their business standing in the Arab world.

The Hamburg weekly Bild am Sonntag named officials of leading companies who acknowledged that their firms gave in to Arab boycott demands.

A government spokesman said that under current law, the boycott was not illegal.

JEWISH LEADER TO CONVEY CONCERN OVER MOLEDET MOVE, BUT PRIVATELY

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- A top American Jewish organizational leader plans to tell Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in Jerusalem this week that the American Jewish community is deeply disturbed by his move to bring the anti-Arab MoleDET party into the Israeli government.

But some members of the influential Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations are questioning why the group, usually quick to issue statements backing Israel, shied away from making its displeasure public.

Shoshana Cardin, the new chairman of the conference, will relay the organization's dismay to Shamir sometime during her visit to Israel, where she is currently attending a meeting of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors.

The decision to take this step was made during a closed-door meeting of the conference Feb. 5, according to participants.

Although the Conference of Presidents has at times expressed opposition to Israeli government policy, it is known to prefer private whispering over public statements on Israeli policies its member groups find problematic.

A few leaders of organizations within the umbrella group have expressed concern that by muting its disagreements with Israeli policy, the Conference of Presidents ends up looking like a puppet of the Israeli government, endangering its credibility both among Jews and others.

"Why are we keeping silent? Why are we hiding?" asked Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and a former chairman of the conference.

The Reform leader said he feels such an issue requires an outspoken response; otherwise silence might be taken for acquiescence.

Shouldn't Be Seen As A 'Puppet'

"No one in the Jewish community, and that includes the Conference of Presidents, should be seen merely as a puppet (of the Israeli government), because the effectiveness of the work is diminished when that happens," said Schindler, who has issued his own statement deploring Shamir's decision.

But some members of the conference argue that the conference's reluctance to speak out publicly on Shamir's move and other controversial issues is a reflection of the umbrella group's internal structure.

The conference, they point out, operates by trying to reach a consensus among its many and disparate member groups, ranging from Orthodox organizations to ones with socialist outlooks.

These members say the conference should be applauded rather than criticized for being able to represent U.S. Jews with one voice, even if that voice is a quiet one.

Another factor in the conference's decision was apparently timing. Many members reportedly felt that with Iraqi missiles raining down on Israel, this was not the proper time to criticize the Israeli government.

But others say Shamir's decision to appoint MoleDET party leader Rehavam Ze'evi to the Cabinet should have triggered a loud and angry response.

Ze'evi has advocated expelling the 1.5 million Palestinians in the administered territories as part of a negotiated peace settlement.

MENTION OF BLOOD LIBEL AGAINST JEWS AT U.N. SESSION DRAWS SHARP PROTEST

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- Israel and the United States are trying to generate the strongest possible condemnation of the ritual blood libel leveled against Jews by Syria at a session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission here last Friday.

The polemic, by the second-ranking member of the Syrian delegation, Nabila Shaalan, so far has elicited neither dissent nor comment from the commission's top officials.

The daily La Tribune de Geneve reported it under the headline "Scandal at the Human Rights Commission: A Tough And Purely Anti-Semitic Declaration."

Yitzhak Lior, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, called on the commission's chairman, Enrique Bernales Ballesteros of Peru, to "denounce this statement publicly and unequivocally in order to preserve the credibility and honor of the commission."

The U.S. ambassador, Morris Abram, was reported to have requested instructions from Washington as he, too, sought a strong reaction to the centuries-old calumny against Jews.

It was revived by Shaalan during the Feb. 8 debate over the agenda item on racism and racial discrimination.

She recommended that commission members read "a valuable book which confirms the racist character of Zionism."

It is called "The Matzah of Zion" and was published in 1985 by the Syrian defense minister, Maj. Gen. Mustafa Tlas. He justified the ritual murder charges brought against Jews in Damascus in 1840 for the death of a Catholic missionary.

Jews Were Arrested And Tortured

The blood libel in various forms dates back to medieval Europe and has been one of the most potent incitements to physical violence against Jews. It accuses Jews of using the blood of Christians, usually young children, to make their Passover matzot.

In Damascus 151 years ago, leaders of the Jewish community were arrested and tortured until they would say they killed a Catholic friar, Father Tomaso, and used his blood for ritual purposes.

One of the accused died in prison; eight were condemned to death. They were saved only by the intervention of Adolphe Cremieux of France and Sir Moses Montefiore of Britain with the Egyptian ruler of Syria, Mehmet Ali.

The Syrian delegate claimed the book proved Jews engaged in ritual murder. "Whoever reads this book will be informed of the reason behind Father Tomaso's murder and will clearly discover the racist reality of Zionism," she said.

As La Tribune de Geneve pointed out, Shaalan made her provocative response in the presence of Bernales, Jan Martensen, director of the Human Rights Center, and John Pace, the commission's secretary-general, none of whom reacted.

Ambassador Lior's letter to Bernales said: "It would be astonishing if such a deliberate incitement to racial and religious hatred were to be uttered with impunity in any United Nations forum."

"It surpasses belief, however, that it should be made in the Commission on Human Rights, the very organ entrusted with the task of combatting all manifestations of discrimination and bigotry."

SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTRY BACKS EXTREMIST ANTI-SEMITIC JOURNALS

NEW YORK, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The Soviet Defense Ministry is openly supporting the most extreme journals of conservative opinion in the Soviet Union, which are notorious conduits of anti-Semitic propaganda.

The ministry has issued instructions that thousands of copies of extremist journals be stocked in military establishments, according to the London-based Institute of Jewish Affairs, a joint project of the World Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

The resulting mass subscriptions provide a lease on life for many of these periodicals, which otherwise might pass out of existence.

Under new Soviet law, publications must be self-supporting, which means the subscriptions "become decisive for their survival," the institute's report said.

It disclosed that the Soviet army command has ordered 100,000 copies of the literary monthly "Nash Sovremennik." Another magazine, "Molodaya Gvardiya," also has been made obligatory.

Both journals espouse the views of conservative nationalists and neo-Stalinists and are outlets for anti-Semitic propaganda.

The report concluded that "conservative Russian nationalist publications are a principal source of anti-Semitism and are being strengthened by the decision of the Soviet Ministry of Defense to support them, a move which must be seen as part of the general conservative backlash in the USSR."

JNF NEEDS MONEY TO PREPARE LAND FOR BUILDING OF IMMIGRANT HOMES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 12 (JTA) -- The Jewish National Fund will need more money to prepare land for immigrant housing and has only Diaspora Jewry to turn to, JNF World Chairman Moshe Rivlin told members of the South African Zionist Federation on a solidarity visit last week.

He said JNF is doubling its land development work in Galilee and the Negev at the request of Israel's Housing Ministry and will require \$30 million to \$40 million above the regular budget.

JNF is currently developing land at 55 sites in Galilee and the Negev, in preparation for building some 70,000 housing units for immigrants.

Rivlin explained that the land reclamation agency is forgoing its revenue from leasing land to the public, because the government has decided to provide land free of charge for new olim.

Diaspora Jewry must be partners, he said, inasmuch as the JNF holds the land in trust for the entire Jewish people.

The South African party visited sites where Iraqi Scud missiles demolished homes. They proceeded to Modi'in to plant trees under this year's Tu B'Shevat slogan: "Buds in Spite of Scuds."

The South Africans were assisted in the planting by recent immigrants from the Soviet Union employed in JNF's afforestation work.

Modi'in, historic home of the Maccabees, is slated to become a town of over 70,000.

Because of the Presidents Day holiday in the United States, the Daily News Bulletin will not be published on Monday, Feb. 18.