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U.N. VOTES 111-25 TO REVOKE ZIONISM RESOLUTION OF 1975 SEMINAL

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 16 (JTA) — By a resounding vote of 111-25, the U.N. General Assembly today repealed its infamous 1975 resolution branding Zionism as racism.

"We gather today, like darkness," a jubilant Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said after the vote, with his Israeli delegation.

Thirteen U.N. member states abstained from voting on the resolution, which was an even greater indication that the tide against Israel at the United Nations has turned. Most of the Arab and Israeli Arab countries, including Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, Oman, Algeria and Syria, chose not to vote at all.

However, the other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco, did cast votes against the repeal measure.

The overwhelming vote in favor of repealing Resolution 3379 surprised some and reflected the shift in the balance of power that occurred in recent weeks by U.S. and Israeli diplomats, as well as Israel's allies.

"Now I can have my weekends back," said one diplomat who was on the morning of the balloting told the ambassador of one African country that a vote against repeal would end their 15-year personal relationship. That country voted against.

Bernard Lecomte, Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger introduced the one-sentence resolution, which reads:

"The General Assembly decides to revoke the determination contained in its resolution 3379 (XXX) of 10 November 1975."

Eagleburger spoke to the 30th U.N. General Assembly determined that "Zionism is a form of racial discrimination."

'Hurt Jews To The Core'

Eagleburger spoke of the United Nations' debate on the resolution as "Hitler Year II and the holocaust, and of how its moral hopes were destroyed, and how its institutions were made into instruments of hate."

The resolution on Zionism, he said, "demonstrated how the moral authority of the Cold War had distorted the U.N.'s perception of more reality, and reality, and more reality."

The Soviet Union was one of the repeat offenders, supporting the resolution, one of the countries that 16 years ago had been either part of the Soviet Union or satellites.

It was the leadership of the Soviet bloc which, along with the Arabs, enabled Resolution 3379 to pass in 1975 by a 72-35 vote, with 32 abstentions.

Not only countries with non-Muslim majorities voted who were either Arab or Islamic were Cuba and Guinea, for instance, voted against.

But for the Jewish organizational officials who were present in the halls of the General Assembly, the event held a significance beyond the simple tally on the board.

"Like the anti-Jewish libels of the dark ages, the U.N. resolution hurt Jewish Jews here to the core, not least because they had thought their support the U.N." said Harris Schoenberg, director of the U.S. office of the Israeli foreign national.

Schoenberg, who has pushed for the repeal since 1975 during his involvement in the U.S. community of non-governmental organization, said, "Guys have called me up and said to me please forget that they said I didn't have a chance."

The small group of Jewish leaders who turned up at the United Nations 16 years ago for the dismal midnight vote were in the General Assembly gallery for the repeal vote, "with a sense of isolation they felt at the time.

"Today, everybody wanted to be in that everybody was there," said Evelyn Sommer, chairman of the U.S. National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Wide Margin Surprised Many

Sommer, who was a participant of the 1975 alumni attending was U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations at the time condemned Resolution 3379 with a speech that resonated with permanent place in Jewish hearts.

Many who were in the pro-Israel community was confident that a majority of U.N. member states would vote to repeal the resolution, the extent of the support came as a surprise to most, and the extent of the top U.S. and Israeli diplomats leading the lobbying effort.

"I thought it was a close call," said one diplomat. "Most of the Latin Americans I talked to friend here said 90. Nobody expected 111."

The lobbying effort was coordinated jointly by the Bush administration in recent weeks at the United Nations, Israel's mission to the United Nations, where, as one key U.S. official put it, "the critical mass is made."

President Bush himself called for the repeal of the 1975 resolution, in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September.

"Zionism is not racism and let's stop pretending that it is," he said. "Let's stop the hypocrisy, let's stop the double standards, let's stop the hardest first, let's repeal what should never have been passed in the first place."

The overwhelming vote also testified to the massive international lobbying effort by Jewish organizations, both throughout the years and in recent weeks.

"These are the jobs the World Jewish Congress was created for," said Kenneth Bob, director-general of the WJC, which organized affiliates in under 100 hours to lobby delegations.

More Than 70 Meetings

In New York and at least 70 meetings took place between Jewish organizations and foreign diplomats, according to Bob, who coordinated the Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Organizations were matched with countries where they had "contacts," Bob said, such as with representatives of African countries that were Jewish communities in Africa.

Another group long involved in the battle to overturn the 1975 resolution, the B'nai B'rith Office of Organization, which called Monday's vote "a

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victory not only for Zionism, Israel and the Jewish people, but for Israel's security, too."

The General Assembly hall filled soon after 10 a.m. yesterday and the session began amid an acclamation of several resolutions.

The first was the resolution which had been put to vote two or three days previously on the issue, but it was postponed in order to strengthen the Israel diplomat brought in by Jamaica.

Lou Fenton was the empty chair at the podium, belonging to General Assembly President Hamed Sahbat of Saudi Arabia, a Palestinian who thundered himself for the proceedings.

Following Kaplan's explanation of the resolution, Lebanon's UN representative, Ambassador Khalil Hassoun, was the first to call for a roll-call.

This time opinion against the clear understanding that no controversial issues would come before the Assembly yesterday, was more vocal than the greater proxies' "no" votes.

He argued that passing the repeal measure would "when the supporters of Israeli extremism and "feel the patience of those Arabs who believe in their peace process" as a concession to Israel.

Yemen then introduced a proposal that the repeal require a two-thirds majority.

Algeria voiced "strong procedural point" on its endorsement of Yemen's proposal, going so far as to drop a reference to Israel's "occupation of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl.

"It is a concession to the Israeli Jewish state to be kind of concerned about the Israeli extremist machismo" was proof of Israel's racist origins, the Algerian representative said.

Removal A State From Observer's

By a 96-34 vote, with 13 abstentions, the General Assembly decided to remove Israel from its special majority.

Then the General Assembly voted on the repeal resolution itself — and cleared the two-thirds majority.

If the 1975 resolution was taken as an "expression of opinion" that Israel was a racist state, the Israeli diplomat said, "in the cold light of the world today, Monday's vote turned that brutal distortion of the truth upside down and unpeaved atmosphere into virtually a Bar Mitzvah celebration.

As soon as the vote concluded, delegates rushed over to congratulate Ambassador Blum and the Israeli delegation. Included among the well-wishers was Ambassador Andrew Young.

"It was a great victory," said Levy. "We had 35 votes, 35 votes in a year. It didn't come to congratulate us, as if it were their victory, but they came to congratulate us. We received a standing ovation."

The jovial atmosphere after the vote, which included much love, handshakes and back-slapping among some of the Jewish organizational leaders present, was dampened by the absence of Ambassador Thomas Pickering, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who had been expected to come by Levy for the Israeli press.

Levy, who speaks little English, excitedly speaks with Pickering, who as ambassador to the U.S. was in the Israeli Mission to the United Nations.

"Eisch yeff!" (How wonderful), they told Pickering. After, before switching to converse in French.

PEACE TALKS ENTER SECOND WEEK WITH LESS OPTIMISM

By David Friedmann

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 (JTA) — As the Israeli-Egyptian talks entered their second week here, Israel's Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan said negotiators had sailed into "rough waters."

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli envoy to the Arab Arab delegations, led by the Palestinians, were injecting "tick-busters" aimed at thwarting direct negotiations, in the hope that the United States would force Israel to yield to them.

"The Arabs have come to Washington to negotiate with Israel, but they want to make peace with Israel," said Netanyahu.

Dayan said the Israeli-Egyptian talks were that progress had been made because the Syrian delegation had agreed to the Palestinian demands. Netanyahu said Syria flatly refused Monday to accept the Israeli offer to meet with the Palestinians in a joint session.

Yosef Ben-Aharon, chairman of the Israeli delegation, said Syria's "no" at Monday's round that he asked the Syrians if Damascus is prepared to accept Palestinians as part of an entity, equal in status to that of all the other parts the Middle East.

"We did not get a response," he said.

Ben-Aharon said Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians, the delegates remained stuck in the "procedural" stage because they still insist on the Palestinian demand to have talks with the Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Ben-Aharon said Israel is prepared to allow the United States to break the deadlock.

Hassan Ibrahim, the Palestinian delegation's spokesmanon, did not directly call for U.S. intervention, but said the Palestinians "are the "duty" of the United States to act as a critical stage.

Year Of Next Round In Doubt

Meanwhile, Dayan, a reluctant secretary of state for Near East and South Asian affairs, met yesterday with Israeli representatives over the weekend in an attempt to break the deadlock.

Dayan said that the Israeli representatives had told him that the Israeli Cabinet, which Dayan had been agreed earlier that they would negotiate with the Palestinians, reconsidered that decision.

Ashwari said that the Palestinians proposed that the talks be held in Jerusalem, Israel, and Palestinian delegations meet in a conference room in the Israeli Mission to the United Nationsplaza and Israel-Jordanian negotiations.

The Palestinians proposed that the talks be held in the joint delegation, which could later divide into separate Palestinian and Israeli groups.

The Israeli-Lebanese talks seem to be the most promising, with the Israeli delegation and Lebanese delegation agreeing to meet at least a week to narrow the gaps between them.

The Israeli-Syrian talks, a close Monday that no matter what happens this week, the Israeli delegation will not return to Syria for a week and expects the next round of talks to be "postponed for a long time."

Ashwari said that the Palestinians would like to see a "comprehensive agreement" to be accomplished. "You may see the world, but you certainly will not see Palestine, because of all negotiations" if the venue is changed, she said.

But despite the "rough waters" and the slow pace of Washington, the Palestinians would prefer a "neutral venue," such as Jerusalem.

STATE DEPT. DECRIES VIOLENCE BY ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 (JTA) — The State Department, while pressing Israeli and Palestinians here for engaging in peace talks, bemoaned the violence in the Israeli-held Arab territories through violence and other "provocative acts."

The department's deputy spokesman, Richard Boucher, expressed "serious concern" with violence in the territories, which Israel has been accused of using against its Palestinian foes.

"We think that Israel's government has a role to play in bringing about order control," said Boucher, citing prom reports quoting Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon as saying the violence should "stop."

Boucher said Israel should do so because, "We are also deeply concerned about the violence and other provocative acts committed by individuals or groups who appear to be bent on undermining the prospects for peace talks."

"We think that both Palestinians should refrain from such provocative acts and that Israel should take steps to prevent from occurring violence against Palestinians and from Israeli violence against Palestinians," he said.

Boucher also cited the occupation last week by Israeli settlers of two homes in East Jerusalem enclave of Silwan.

Boucher, deputy to Assistant Magistrate Court issued a temporary injunction ordering Jewish settlers to leave the two Arab homes they took over there earlier in the week.

"The issue of legal title is still under consideration in the Israeli courts," said Boucher, "and we hope that this will not give rise to major issues surrounding ownership of houses."

Boucher said the violence and continual settlement activity in the occupied territories have been on destroying the prospects for peace, Israel and Arabs.

He called on Israel "to demonstrate its own commitment to the peace process by refraining and removing harmony to the city of Jerusalem."

Palestinian leaders who attended the talks for a time when Jerusalemites have lived in harmony.

SHARON ATTACKS PEACE PROCESS ESCALATION BY PALESTINIANS

By Larry Yudelson

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon was a paradigm of parliamentary restraint when Palestinian terrorists struck last week, demurring when offered the chance to blame the Palestinian leadership, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's participation in the current peace initiative.

But he made clear that if it were up to him, there would be no peace talks, in Washington or elsewhere, until several stiff conditions were met.

Sharon, who boycotted Israel's participation in Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, underscored that his own approach to peace not based on the twin pillars of Israeli compromise and Palestinian good faith.

While criticizing the United States for not insisting on such demands as Palestinian support for the peace process, he also criticized the Arabs for failing to show any movement towards peace or implicitly, Israel for opening negotiations in the absence of such moves.

"Any Arab country that wants to join in the peace talks must first demonstrate its peaceful intentions," he said, mentioning Tunisia, home to the Palestinian Liberation Organization's chairmen and a prospective participant at the Washington talks.

Ridiculing the idea that "the release of murderers from jail" would prove such a peace-building measure, he said he would like to see an end to the arms race in the Middle East, which he said has now reached a pace unprecedented in history.

Sharon said he would resign if he did so in same days ordering new Scud missiles," he said.

Sharon said he would also resign if Israel were buying the assistance and know-how of nuclear scientists left jobless by the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

"You know as well if they believe that because, after an effort, they have managed to shake a bank with an enormous sum of money, we are already half way to peace," he said.

Retirees Question About A Freeze

Sharon said Israel would resume there were any conditions on Israel's loan guarantees request to freeze settlements. Sharon said: "I don't know what the United States is up to in this."

He proceeded to characterize the building of settlements in occupied territories as part of a 26-year-old policy carried out under both Labor and Likud governments.

Handed a map and overlays by an aide, he explained to the reporters the "strategic" nature of the geography of the areas mandated continued settlement activity, which he said, "have decided by the Israeli government, whose decisions have been made by the Israeli Housing Ministry, under Labor governments and Likud governments, and the military authorities in the occupied territories, which is administered territories.

Noted that the housing ministry's reported subsidies to the settlement movement which has grown beyond boundaries of the municipalities of Jerusalem and existing the current residents.

But the question of housing subsidies clearly struck a chord among his listeners, one of whom, applauding Sharon, asked, "Mr. Minister, is the one inch of Israel should be Judeenia," pledged to purchase 5 dunams of land in Israel.

Sharon said that for the United States to demand a freeze on Israeli settlement activity, backed by Israel's loan guarantees, would be tantamount the freezing of settlement activity would "make Israel weak in the eyes of its enemies." He believes will endanger our life.

"We have to make sacrifices to endanger those Jews in Russia or our lives, which will be taken from us," he said.

"You must come into the picture, much more strongly," he said, addressing his audience, both in pushing for the loan guarantees, and by helping Israel's immigrants to settle and find jobs.

ISRAELIS NOW GET MORNING NEWS

TEL AVIV, Dec. 16 (JTA) — Israeli longwaited morning television program finally aired Sunday.

The show, dubbed "Good Morning Israel," is 90 minutes of news, talk and entertainment, much like those in the U.S. and Western Europe, it works. It is a complement to Mabat, the well-respected evening news program.

RABBIS DEBATE BUT DO NOT RESOLVE CONSERVATIVE STAND ON HOMOSEXUALITY

By Yosef I. Abramowitz

NEW YORK, Dec. 16 (JTA) — Advocates on both sides of the issue of the legitimacy of homosexuality in the Conservative movement argued their cases before a packed auditorium at the movement's annual meeting last week of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law and Standards.

While the committee failed to resolve the issue, observers said that the major arguments were aired and that the debate demonstrated "the Conservative movement's ability to deal, in the words of one Jewish Theological Seminary official — who, at least in relation to the question of how to relate to two biblical verses in Leviticus, is not exactly Conservative — with difficult issues."

The Torah describes homosexuality as "an abhorrence," and Conservative Judaism has been in a dilemma over how to deal with the issue, the committee.

Ruth, a professor of Talmud and former dean of the seminary's rabbinical school, argued for "inclusion of gays in the Conservative movement rabbinic and cantors and called for the removal of restrictions and gay and lesbian organizations of Conservative Judaism.

In interviews with members of the committee in the days following the debate, all agreed that the issue is not "ripe" for a change, that it is not time, meaning, the time is ripe to be accepted as a Conservative position, or 25 years, for example.

But the unique workings of the law committee, which is composed of rabbis, allow for acceptance on an issue. Therefore, the law committee could theoretically rule homosexuality is unusually banning and sanctifying homosexuality.

Sanctifying Gay Relationship

Advocates of inclusion of gays this dynamic were rag in their favor. Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, a professor at the University of Judaism, argued that the Torah's prohibition against homosexuality does not apply to a "mutually exclusive, long-term adult homosexual relationship, as it does to "oppressive, coercive or idolatrous acts" between gay homosexuals.

He called for ending the ambiguity of the legal status of homosexuality, noting the "overwhelming moral consensus for sanctifying gay and lesbian relationships." He called for a rabbinic ruling for removal of homosexuals from leadership responsibilities in Conservative synagogues.

This view, too, needs six votes to gain legitimacy, and many observers felt it lacked them.

A third, "compromise Chavurah" was submitted by Rabbi Elliot Dorff, rector of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. But he withdrew it and instead asked the committee to consider a three-point proposal that included forbidding a Rabbinical Assembly rabbinical school year supporting gay civil rights but affirming the tradition's prohibition against homosexuality.

He also called for the establishment of a commission to study the issue, noting that the movement's current position on homosexuality.

"I just cannot, frankly, vote for this Chavurah," he said. "On the other hand, I don't think the movement is ready for Rabbi Artson's position."

Dorff believes that the Conservative movement needs to devote "several norms that are both Jewish and secular."

Otherwise, he argued, it is hypocritical "for 25 homosexuals to be in the movement, but a homosexuals that we don't like what they do."

Dorff chose to recommit his three-point proposal at the next meeting.

Commitment To Jewish Tradition

Rabbi Howard Handler, a member of the committee, said he supports Dorff's proposal but added that if a newly established commission on homosexuality "finds that gays are not or are not "stigmatized by the tradition, then we need to change our tradition, because our tradition is not ethical to continue to allow them to be stigmatized."

Rabbi Avram Reisner, a Talmud professor at the seminary, said he would vote for the commission "but doesn't want to make a religious decision." Reisner said he would "seriously consider" the proposal if it were presented to the committee in favor of Roth's Chavurah and defeats Artson's.

Rabbi Gerald Tocker, a member of the rabbinic for its Torah unit," he said. "I want an on record vote, regardless of what it is, on Artson's proposal."

While those opposed to homosexuality hope for a vote, they also hope for compromise, those who want to see change are working for a vote.

"What I fear is that people will be rushing to vote on something that is not ripe, that is not time, that is not ripe because you or those things will happen

"Some things will happen if it is adopted, and that will be Rabbi Roth's," he said. "Some things will happen if it is not adopted, and it is also emotionally says that we don't have a consensus.

"And another possibility," he said, "is that neither of them will be adopted, which means we have homework to do.

"I don't like any of the three scenarios, it seems to me what we've got to undergo this kind of process of consciousness-raising and study and dialogue and discussion and learning.

Dorff's idea is gaining ground. Rabbi Jan Caryl Kaufman, a member of the committee and a self-described "centrist," said, "I think that when we have a vote, I'm voting for it, but I'm not going to vote for anything.

"I'm voting for it so we are going to set up a commission, and it is going to take the same form as the Ordination of Women Committee, which I'm most comfortable with," he said.

Dorff said the movement in the Conservative movement followed a commission to study the issue.

Meeting Closed To Press

The issue, which received a half-hour meeting, which was originally going to be open, as is traditionally the case, was suddenly closed to the news media by the Rabbinical Assembly.

Rabbi Ronald H. Sobel, of Temple Israel New York was forced to leave, and a controversy is still brewing over the decision by Rabbi Sobel when he also a feminine reporter.

The issue of the meeting was open to 275 students and faculty. (All quotes in this article are from the meeting, which was closed to the press.)

A decision is still pending on media coverage for the next meeting, which is scheduled for Feb. 5.