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EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE TO FREE ISRAELIS, DIPLOMATS SAY AFTER GERMANS RELEASED
By Hugel Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 18 (JTA) -- Israeli officials have welcomed international assurances that the release of two German hostages in Lebanon has not closed the book on efforts to free Israelis who may still be in the hands of Shi'ite militants there.

U.N. hostage negotiator Giandomenico Picco made clear in Beirut that he did not consider the freeing of German relief workers Heinrich Struebig and Thomas Kempfner on Wednesday to be the end of the hostage saga.

They were the last of nearly 100 American and European hostages released in recent years by various Arab and Moslem terrorist groups. But Israel is still in the dark about the whereabouts and fate of six of its service personnel missing in Lebanon.

The only one realistically assumed to be alive is air force navigator Ron Arad, who was shot down over Lebanon in 1986. His family claims to have "reliable information" that he is a prisoner in Iran.

"The file is not closed," Picco said. "We've always said the issue is that of the Western hostages as well as the Lebanese held by Israel and by other Lebanese and the missing Israelis."

Arad's wife, Tami, said she was "very glad" the German hostages were set free. "But I want the free world not to forget Ron and that everybody remember he is still over there."

Israel Demands Release Or Information

Uri Lubrani, Israel's top hostage negotiator, said Israel demands the release of its imprisoned servicemen or hard information about their fate.

While he praised Picco's efforts to date, Lubrani stressed that Israel could not depend solely on outside help in freeing its servicemen, although such help was useful.

"We are left alone in the arena. This wasn't unexpected, but from our perspective we will not be satisfied until all of our missing servicemen are returned home," Lubrani said, apparently meaning dead or alive.

"We will continue to make every effort and won't rest until this matter is concluded," he said.

German authorities insisted there was no quid pro quo for Struebig, 51 and Kempfner, 31 who returned to Germany Wednesday after being held prisoner for three years, mostly in chains.

But Lebanon, Iran and even Syria stand to benefit from the release and so may two Arab terrorists serving time in German prisons.

German politicians praised Iran's and Syria's roles in freeing the hostages.

Many observers in Germany believe the release of the hostages was part of an Iranian effort to break its diplomatic isolation and renew close economic contacts with Germany, and through Germany, with the West in general.

Soon after Struebig and Kempfner were freed, Germany announced that the European community will renew its economic assistance to Lebanon. In addition, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said high ranking Iranian officials will be

received here soon for talks on political and economic cooperation.

Kinkel told reporters Tuesday that Germany did not submit to blackmail to obtain their release and made no deals with their kidnappers. He denied specifically that ransom was paid or promises made to free the brothers Mohammad and Abbas Hamadi.

Mohammad Hamadi is serving a life sentence for the 1985 hijacking of a TWA airliner and the murder of U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem. He was arrested, tried and convicted in Germany after Bonn rejected a U.S. extradition request.

Abbas Hamadi is serving 13 years for kidnapping two Germans in an unsuccessful ploy to free his brother. They were subsequently released.

Struebig and Kempfner were held by followers of Abdel Hadi Hamadi, security chief of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah, who wanted to swap them for his brothers. But Bonn refused.

Nevertheless, the brothers can soon expect improved conditions in prison and the grant of their long-standing request to be held in the same facility, German officials told reporters Wednesday. They are currently incarcerated in separate prisons.

(JTA correspondent David Kantor in Bonn contributed to this report.)

LABOR AND LIKUD GO AT EACH OTHER
ON EVE OF ISRAELI ELECTIONS**By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, June 18 (JTA) -- Almost on the eve of election day, a new row erupted between Labor and Likud over a poster that mushroomed in the Tel Aviv area, bearing the Hebrew words "Avodah Meshachreret."

In English it means "Work Frees," which is innocuous. But the German translation is "Arbeit Macht Frei," the sickening homily that adorned the entrances to Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps.

Labor Party leaders at first assumed the poster, with its play on the word "work," or "labor," was dreamed up by misguided local branch workers unaware of its ghoulish connotation. But it became clear soon that someone was out to do the Labor Party no good in next Tuesday's elections.

Labor filed a complaint with the police Thursday and demanded a swift investigation. In a formal statement, the party accused "political rivals" of perpetrating this "low and disgusting gimmick."

Likud quickly assumed a posture of outraged innocence. It issued a statement condemning the posters.

Labor and Likud also argued over which party was in the forefront of defending Israel against nuclear attack.

In interviews Thursday in the Israeli dailies Ma'ariv and Yediot Achronot, Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin maintained that Israel's "reply" to a possible nuclear threat in the region was conceived and developed "years ago, long before the Likud came to power."

Rabin made the point in connection with Likud's repeated assertion that Menachem Begin's decision to bomb the Iraqi reactor in June 1981

saved Israel from a nuclear threat a decade ago.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir responded to Rabin in an interview with Ma'ariv, which quoted him as saying that all Israeli governments have "dealt with this matter on the highest levels of government, constantly over the years."

In other campaign developments, Interior Minister Arye Deri told a rally of his strictly Orthodox Sephardic Shas party that it should support a Likud government because Likud is "less anti-religious than the Left."

Some observers believe Deri is under pressure from Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the strictly Orthodox Ashkenazic leader from Bnei Brak, to commit Shas in advance of the election not to form an alliance with Labor.

Schach himself addressed a mass rally of the combined strictly Orthodox United Torah Front in Tel Aviv Wednesday night. He lambasted secular Jews but was careful not to renew his attack on Sephardic religious leaders whom he branded "immature" last week.

Schach said Israel's true vocation was to build more yeshivas. Building "more factories and more armies" was pointless because the Arabs would soon overtake the Jews demographically anyway, he said.

Meanwhile, an apparent attempt by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to persuade Israel's strictly Orthodox parties to join a Labor-led coalition government after the elections, apparently backfired.

Agudat Yisrael's veteran Knesset member Menachem Porush told him no dice when he was in Cairo this week at Mubarak's invitation.

Porush, who returned Thursday night, said he discussed domestic, foreign and political issues with the Egyptian leader for more than two hours. Also present were Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Bassiouni and Israel's envoy in Cairo, Efraim Dubek.

Interviewed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency after he landed, Porush said he explained to Mubarak why the United Torah Front of which Agudah is a part would "not lend our hand to a Labor-led government."

Labor has taken "anti-Orthodox postures" and such a coalition would embrace the leftist Meretz party which is even worse, Porush told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

He said he also stressed to Mubarak that Israel could never make territorial concessions because it is forbidden by the Torah and violated the Balfour Declaration.

Political observers recalled that Mubarak invited Israel's former Sephardic chief rabbi, Ovadia Yosef, on an official visit to Cairo in 1989.

Yosef, who is spiritual leader of the Shas party, which is as strictly Orthodox as the Agudah, maintains that the Torah allows territorial concessions if the object is to make peace and save lives.

HOUSE PANEL KEEPS ISRAEL AID INTACT BUT CUTS MAY STILL BE MADE ON FLOOR

By Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, June 18 (JTA) -- The House Appropriations Committee approved a \$13.9 billion foreign assistance bill for fiscal year 1993 reflecting broad cuts but leaving aid to Israel and to Egypt intact at current levels.

The committee on Thursday earmarked the

Bush administration's full request for \$3 billion in military and economic aid to Israel and \$2.1 billion for Egypt, while cutting \$1.2 billion from the rest of the White House's foreign aid budget.

But Israel advocates are increasingly nervous that the \$3 billion will be jeopardized by a political climate increasingly hostile to the idea of sending U.S. dollars abroad in the midst of a domestic economic crisis.

Their concern was fueled by an announcement last week by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, that he would offer an amendment when the bill reaches the floor to cut an additional \$400 million across the board and without exceptions. The full House is expected to vote on the bill next week.

Sources say the \$90 million cut in aid to Israel that would result is not as troubling in itself as the precedent it would set. It would be the first time that Israel would lose its politically privileged status and be put on the chopping block along with every other country.

Obey was unavailable for comment Thursday but his spokesman said he was still considering the measure.

Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.), a committee member, said he believed Obey was trying to preempt other amendments that would propose more drastic cuts. But Smith said he was opposed to the strategy, calling the amendment, "the wrong thing to do."

Smith said the committee's bill, already at \$1.2 billion below the president's request and at "the lowest-ever percentage" of the Gross National Product, "already serves the people well."

Warnings Have Been Sounded About Foreign Aid

Smith said if there are further cuts, they should be limited to 1 percent. He said they also should exempt aid to Israel and Egypt and other programs, such as development assistance and aid to Africa, which already had been cut to the bone.

Obey and his Senate counterpart, Foreign Operations Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), have been sounding warnings in recent months that foreign aid will undergo harsher scrutiny than ever before.

"In the post Cold War period, we will have to reevaluate all of foreign aid," said Leahy at a subcommittee hearing earlier this month to a panel of witnesses on the Middle East.

"This should not be taken as a signal by any country, but Americans need to know there's a legitimate reason" for these programs, he said. "Otherwise, there won't be a constituency for things really vital to our national security."

Thomas Dine, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, who testified, told Leahy, "We are aware of anti-foreign aid feeling in the body politic (but) foreign aid is an opportunity to advance our interests."

"It behooves people like you to stand up and argue the case," Dine said.

The foreign aid bill drew criticism from Jerome Segal, president of the Jewish Peace Lobby, who also testified at Leahy's hearing against indirect U.S. subsidies of settlements in Israel's occupied territories.

Segal on Thursday criticized the Israel aid portion of the bill, calling it "business as usual" because it gives the president no leverage with Israel and reflects no effort to disburse aid in a way that would curb the growth of settlements.

LUBAVITCHER REBBE RECOVERING FROM GALL BLADDER SURGERY

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, June 18 (JTA) -- Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rebbe, underwent successful surgery Thursday morning to remove an infected gall bladder, and is said to be resting comfortably.

The 90-year-old leader of the Lubavitch branch of Hasidim has also been recovering from a stroke he suffered March 2.

"The surgery could be an asset to the overall recovery process," said Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the rebbe's spokesman.

Soon after a Hatzoloh ambulance rushed the rebbe to New York's Mt. Sinai hospital at about midnight Wednesday, hundreds of his followers gathered in a prayer vigil outside the hospital.

They were joined in their prayers by thousands of Lubavitchers at the worldwide headquarters of the Hasidic denomination, located at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, and at the Western Wall in Jerusalem and Lubavitch centers around the world.

"There must have been millions of people praying for the rebbe," said Krinsky. "It's been a spontaneous outpouring of love and camaraderie for someone they love very much."

His supporters have been reciting psalms for his recovery ever since his stroke, which left him partially paralyzed and unable to make the frequent synagogue appearances which are a central feature of Lubavitch life in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn.

And they will continue to pray until he recovers, according to one Lubavitcher. "No doubt the prayers are a great source of strength for the rebbe," said Rabbi Yosef Friedman, editor of Lubavitch International Magazine.

The rebbe made his first and only public appearance since his stroke on the first day of Shavuot, May 7.

He came out of 770 in his wheelchair, to the front stoop of his residence, and watched a parade of young Lubavitchers celebrate the holiday.

If his recovery from the gallbladder surgery proceeds as hoped, he will likely be released from the hospital after 7 or 8 days, said Krinsky.

The question on many observers' minds is what will happen to the Lubavitch movement once its leader dies, particularly in light of the fact that some of his followers believe he is the Messiah.

Said Krinsky, the question of succession "has never been discussed."

"It's not a topic of consideration in the past nor now."

GERMAN DELEGATION VISITS ISRAEL TO STRIKE DEAL OVER CEMETERY SITE

By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK, June 18 (JTA) -- Officials of the city of Hamburg, Germany, and representatives of a German developing company seeking to build a mall over the site of a Jewish cemetery, have flown to Israel in an effort to reach a compromise with Orthodox Jews who object to the proposed construction.

The German delegation will meet this week with Itzhak Kolitz, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, who visited the cemetery grounds last month to assess the situation.

The site in Ottensen, a suburb of Hamburg, has been the scene of a bitter battle between the developing firm, Bull & Liedtke Co., which legally bought the land from German Jews after World War II, and Orthodox Jews, who have flocked to the grounds from around the world to halt construction with their bodies and their prayers.

Construction of the mall was scheduled to begin in March, but has been postponed repeatedly, due to the efforts of the protesters.

Kolitz issued a decree which maintained that according to Jewish law, it is absolutely forbidden to remove or transfer the remains from the cemetery. Yet he stated that construction on the site can begin, so long as the structure is erected above the ground, on supports.

"Our decision is given with a very heavy heart, taking into account that the purchasers of the property have already invested quite heavily into this project," Kolitz said in his statement.

"Construction on top of the graves still does not give the proper respect to the dead," he added.

According to Kolitz's statement, the cemetery site remains the property of the Jewish community. No Jew has the authority to sell a cemetery, he said.

German authorities claim that they have the right to develop on the site because the Jews who returned to Hamburg after World War II knowingly sold it. Yet protesters argue that those Jews were ignorant of the fact that it was a cemetery, because of the lack of gravestones or other physical evidence.

The cemetery was destroyed by the Nazis, who built bunkers on the site.

Members of Athra Kadisha, the Society For the Preservation of Jewish Holy Sites, which has been at the forefront of the protests, sounded somewhat hopeful about the outcome of this week's meeting.

Rabbi Lazar Stern of the Athra Kadisha said of Kolitz's decree, "I hope the German government will view this decision as a wise compromise which will completely satisfy nobody, but also permit a solution to emerge."

Rabbi Hertz Frankel, spokesperson for Athra Kadisha, said, "There is a big difference between the ruling and the details that needs to be worked out. If they are going to build a platform, they need to work out how many inches off the ground it has to be, and other necessary details."

"But of course, we hope that they won't build at all," he added.

CAMP TOURS DON'T BOOST SHOAH AWARENES

By David Kantor

BONN, June 18 (JTA) -- Taking German youth on tours of former concentration camps does not increase their awareness of the Holocaust unless there has been a prior educational process, a group of scholars concluded in a study presented in Wiesbaden. In fact, without adequate background the experience can be counterproductive, they warned.

The researchers escorted dozens of German youth groups to various camp sites, including Buchenwald in Thuringia. They found that in many instances the young visitors derived "pleasure from the horrors."

Arthur Fischer, a Frankfurt psychologist who conducted the study, said many youths were "disappointed" because they did not see "real gas chambers."

THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS: GROWTH OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES COULD HARM LIKUD'S PROSPECTS

[Part 4 of Series]

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- While the opinion polls show the Labor Party to be losing a steady trickle of support to the Meretz bloc on its left, the Likud seems to be hemorrhaging heavily on its right flank.

The polls show the three established right-wing parties -- Tsomet, Moledet and Tehiya -- all winning three or four seats, while a new rightist list, under settlement leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger, may siphon off thousands more votes.

In terms of "bloc arithmetic," this trend ought not to matter. For what matters more than the size of the Likud and Labor is the size of the blocs they each lead.

Nevertheless, the growth of the far-right parties at the expense of the Likud has leaders of Israel's governing party worried.

Following is a look at each of the key parties of the Israeli right:

THE LIKUD. The polls show the Likud winning just above 30 seats -- only a quarter of the Knesset. This is hardly a respectable showing for the party that has prided itself for the past decade and a half as being "the people's party."

Moreover, a whittled-down Likud could find itself weakened vis-a-vis Labor if, as some pundits consider most likely, the Big Two decide to set up a unity government after the elections. The relative sizes of the two parties will play some role in their jockeying over the premiership and other top Cabinet jobs should they decide to form a government together.

In the campaign, the Likud has sought, with considerable success, to stress themes which to a certain extent are contradictory:

It has directed brutal personal attacks on Labor leader Yitzhak Rabin, asserting that Rabin is unfit to rule because as chief of staff in May 1967, he underwent a brief nervous breakdown during the tense waiting period before the Six-Day War.

The Likud also has reactivated rumors circulating in the political community for years that Rabin drinks too much.

Yet at the same time, the Likud has sought to argue that the politically middle-of-the-road Rabin, who is projecting a "consensus image" and remains personally popular in the polls, does not in fact represent his party; that behind his coat-tails hides a "dovecote full of Burgs and Beilins and Haim Ramons."

Begin and other Likud figures brush aside Rabin's protestations that he would not take the Communist and Arab parties into a government under his leadership. In a sense they are right: For while Rabin would indeed not wish to rely on their votes in order to govern, he certainly wants to have their backing as part of the "blocking bloc" he hopes to head.

The Likud campaign is also grappling with another set of ostensible contradictions:

On the one hand, the Likud presents itself as the guardian of Eretz Yisrael, the only serious bastion against the left at home and against Arab hostility and international pressure abroad.

But on the other hand, the party's propaganda footage makes much play of the launching in these past months of a Middle East peace process, including both direct talks with regional protagon-

ists and multilateral negotiations designed to harness the world community's material support for Middle East peace.

The three far-right parties vie with each other in trying to dismantle this Likud propaganda edifice. They each argue that the peace process is replete with dangers and pitfalls for Israel, that it could well lead to the creation of a diplomatic dynamic that would inexorably produce overwhelming pressure for Palestinian independence.

But beyond these similarities, the three parties of the right each have a unique complexion:

MOLEDET. Rehavam Ze'evi's party, which first entered the Knesset in 1988 with two seats, is the only party that openly advocates the "transfer" of the Palestinian population from the administered territories to the surrounding Arab countries.

The other two far-right parties -- and indeed parts of the Likud and the National Religious Party -- sympathize with this goal. But they do not openly espouse it as the central platform of their foreign policy.

Ze'evi hopes to pick up the support of those in the electorate who had hoped to vote for either Kach or Kahane Chai, the two spiritual heirs of the late Meir Kahane which both have been disqualified by the Central Elections Committee on the grounds that they are racist.

TSOMET. The unique selling proposition of this party is its leader, Rafael Eitan, a former Israel Defense Force chief of staff who served as agriculture minister in the outgoing government.

Eitan is a personally attractive figure in many respects: a farmer-soldier from the moshav of Tel Adashim, he speaks his mind in clipped, simple sentences. He is a "Mr. Clean" in Israeli politics. And he makes no attempt to hide or moderate his strong antipathy toward the Orthodox establishment, especially the system of army service deferment for yeshiva students.

Eitan has a hard core of support among formerly pro-Labor circles in moshavim and even kibbutzim that feel the Labor Party is too dovish.

TEHIYA. This, the most veteran of the far-right parties, is also the one facing the most difficulty in carving out a clear identity for itself on the right of the spectrum.

Led by Professor Yuval Ne'eman, who is more of a scientist than a politician, and by polemicist firebrands Geula Cohen and Elyakim Haetzni, Tehiya has sought to present a mixed secular-religious image, with religious settlement leader Benny Katzover in the fourth slot.

But the Gush Emunim following in the territories has not, it seems, been wholly attracted to Tehiya -- hence Rabbi Moshe Levinger's decision to throw his hat into the ring by forming his own party.

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY. Because the National Religious Party has, for the first time ever, solemnly committed itself to side with Likud after the elections, it too must be considered a key component on the right of the map in this election campaign.

The NRP's move away from its non-aligned status reflects the sentiments sweeping the younger generation of the knitted-skullcap Orthodox Zionists, both in the territories and in Israel proper. What the NRP's pronouncement means is that if Labor finds itself in a position to try to form a narrow government, it will look to the ultra-Orthodox haredi parties first to join it, and to NRP only as a last resort.