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NAIROBI WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
WINS RELIGION COMMENTARY
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM* OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

What is the connection between the International Women's Conference now meeting in Nairobi and Tisha B'Av?

Tisha B'Av, which will be observed next Sunday by the Jewish people, is a fast day that commemorates the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. According to Jewish tradition, the ancient Temple was destroyed because of the moral evil of sinat chinom, hatred without cause.

The International Conference in Nairobi has been convened to examine progress and problems of women throughout the world during the past decade, and to plan strategies for the remainder of the 20th century. Clearly women, especially those in the poorer, developing countries face enormous personal and family problems. Millions of women confront daily hunger, disease, illiteracy, discrimination, violence, involuntary prostitution.

To deal with these urgent needs, a fortune in money and time has been spent in bringing 10,000 women to the informal Forum, and some 3,000 government-appointed delegates to the official meeting. But that ancient sin of "causeless hatred" appears now to have dominated Nairobi's deliberations. Soviet, Arab, and Marxist delegates have exploited every major women's issue for absurd attacks on American imperialism and on Israel and Zionism.

There is a place for legitimate political debate -- and this is the United Nations itself. If the Nairobi conference continues as an anti-Western political battlefield, the loser will not be the United States nor Israel. The real losers tragically will be women the world over.

*Rabbi Tanenbaum, who is director of the international relations department of the American Jewish Committee, presents a weekly religion commentary over WINS-Westinghouse Broadcasting System.

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NEW YORK... "The Governments of the United States and Western Europe have insisted that the UN Nairobi conference avoid divisive political issues more appropriately addressed in the UN's political bodies; unfortunately, Arab and Soviet bloc governments seem intent on injecting into Nairobi the issue of Palestinian Women, singling it out for special attention despite the many truly problematic situations women face in many parts of the world," according to Richard Maass, chairman of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights.

In anticipation of this possible manipulation of July's Nairobi meeting, Mr. Maass announced the publication of a book-length study on Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza, written by Dr. Mala Tabory, a legal scholar and social scientist.

The study, according to Sidney Liskofsky, Program Director of the Institute, challenges assertions made in the UN Secretariat's Report on Palestinian Women, the background document for discussion of this issue at Nairobi.

"The UN Report," Mr. Liskofsky said, "unfairly criticizes Israel, and assumes Israel is always to blame for unsatisfactory conditions, real or imagined." The UN Report, he noted, "admits that it is not the product of original or independent research. It relies on prior UN documents, which themselves reflect anti-Israel bias." Mr. Liskofsky also pointed out that previous UN Women's Conferences in Mexico City and Copenhagen became forums for attacking Israel and for equating Zionism with racism.

Using a wide variety of sources, including extensive interviews with women in the West Bank and Gaza, the JBI study found that:

* Since 1967, infant mortality in the West Bank and Gaza has dropped by 50%, leaving it 400% lower than Saudi Arabia's infant death rate.

* Life expectancy in the occupied territories has jumped from 40 to 62 years under Israeli rule, placing residents there ahead of Jordanians, Egyptians, Syrians and residents of other Arab countries;

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* Palestinian workers, men and women, are free to join the Israeli union Histadrut, and a total of 31 unions operate openly in the West Bank and 7 in Gaza.

* Illiteracy among women in the West Bank dropped by 26% and in Gaza by 28% since 1967, putting these women ahead of women in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

* Health services and conditions have undergone extensive improvement in the past 18 years, and the West Bank and Gaza have been freed of malaria.

An abbreviated version of the study is being distributed by the American Jewish Committee for the information of participants in the Nairobi conference. Copies are available by contacting Morton Yarmon, Director of Public Relations, American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022.

Founded in 1972 to honor the memory of Jacob Blaustein, a leading human rights advocate, the Jacob Blaustein Institute aims to further understanding of human rights and to help translate human rights principles into practice.

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SPANISH OFFICIAL SAYS DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH ISRAEL ARE LIKELY IN NEAR FUTURE

WASHINGTON, July 15 (JTA) -- The First Minister of the Spanish Embassy, Juan Jose

Arboli, told an American Jewish Committee delegation that Spain's policies regarding establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel "are in a good place" and that "movement in that direction should occur in the very near future."

Arboli made that statement in a meeting held in the Spanish Embassy last week with an AJC delegation consisting of Dr. David Gordis, Leo Nevas, Marc Tanenbaum, and Hyman Bookbinder.

The Spanish Minister also told the AJC group that Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez has informed a number of Arab countries recently of his intention to establish diplomatic ties with Israel and that it was inappropriate for Arab governments to try to block that from happening. "We are an independent sovereign nation," Arboli said, "and we cannot let other governments determine our foreign policy."

Spain recently negotiated an agreement for entering the European Economic Community with Portugal. One of the terms of entering the EEC was an understanding that Spain would establish diplomatic ties with Israel. Two weeks ago the Gonzalez government reshuffled major Cabinet posts, including the designation of a new Foreign Minister.

Cites Existence Of Warm Personal Ties

Arboli also told the AJC representatives that "warm personal ties exist between Mr. Gonzalez and Israel's Prime Minister, Shimon Peres" and that "there is widespread warm feeling among the Spanish people towards Israel and the Jewish people."

In response to a proposal from Tanenbaum, AJC's international relations director, Arboli said his country would be eager to cooperate with the AJC in arranging civic and cultural exchanges in the near future. The AJC's international relations department carries on such exchange programs with West Germany, France, Italy, and several Latin American governments and civic and religious groups in those countries.

Last February, an AJC delegation of lay leaders carried out a mission to Spain, where they met with government, political, civic, and religious leaders.