

CD-1106 Transcription

Discusses French involvement in the Middle East. undated.

Marc Tanenbaum:

The hall, and it's going to be chaired by --

(break in audio)

-- and that, too, we will have to approach in terms of the modesty of our resources now. But, certainly, we can do far more than has been the case up to this time.

I simply want to turn to two other areas, and close with that. As many of you know, and will read about in this document if you not been aware of it thus far, under [Gordy Sach's?] leadership, and under our president, we've begun a significant effort in relating to the French government as we had earlier related to the West German government. And I must say that the experience that the delegation of AJC leaders had, meeting with President Mitterrand and his two closest aides, with the Foreign Minister Chaisson and six members of the French cabinet, as well as other leaders in French cultural and social life, as well as with all the leadership of the Jewish community, is clear to us that there are avenues of opportunity [01:00] in those relationships

with key centers of the West European community, many of whom -- certainly France, certainly West Germany, certainly Great Britain -- have roles to play far beyond the borders of Western Europe.

France, for better or for worse, is emerging as an actor -- has been there for some time -- but sees itself as playing some significant role in Lebanon in relationship with Syria, in other parts of the Middle East. France plays a significant role in terms of French-speaking countries in West Africa. As some of you have heard me say, there are 300,000 Frenchmen now working as a civil service in 20 West African, Central African countries. And we have begun to talk to them about the role they can play in advancing diplomatic relations between Israel and African governments, as we have begun, increasingly now, to relate to African governments, especially those located at the United Nations.

Beyond that, we have begun to work systematically, now, in a programmatic [02:00] way with FEDECO. And to the degree that FEDECO wishes our assistance, we plan to try to be over every possible assistance to them, especially in terms of the internal religious, cultural educational needs of these miniscule communities who will be threatened in their survival, apart from

the external political, economic turmoil, even if that were not there, if they are not given the assistance they need in terms of rabbis and teachers and youth workers, and community-organization people -- will not make it into the twenty-first century, unless the resources are made available. And this past Tuesday, we arranged a meeting for Mr. Sabbaj on behalf of FEDECO, with leaders of major seminaries, and the United States Jewish educational groups, as well as with [Hayas?], JDC, JWB, and others. And I hope that, out of that, we will make a contribution to the internal morale and spiritual substance of those communities, even as we try to deal with some of [03:00] the more hard and difficult geopolitical issues that are at stake.

Finally, it is absolutely essential, in the implementation of this program, that this program gain hands and feet in every community in this country. We plan, during the course of the year, as resources allow, to come to chapter leadership -- all of you who are here -- with a view toward organizing conferences and consultations with world-affairs councils, foreign-affairs groups, local consulates around the country, which we have begun to demonstrate can have significant impact in enlarging an understanding of our positions on a whole range of issues that we have discussed.

I want to thank you for your attention and participation, which has been a source of very great encouragement to all of us on the staff of the International Relations Commission. (applause)

**Gordy Sach:**

Before introducing Howard, let me take a moment for a statement of personal privilege. As you can see, [04:00] the activities of the International Relations Commission are going to expand really exponentially. And it so happens that I have had a wonderful year as your chairman, and I appreciate greatly the privilege that Howard extended to me in giving me the chance to serve you in this post.

I regret that I will not be able to continue in this post, because of -- fortunately -- a very expansive period of growth in my business that requires (applause) my time. (laughter) And I cannot give this post the kind of attention and time, going forward, that it is going to require in order to successfully implement the programs that have been undertaken.

I want to thank you for the privilege of having served. I pledge that I will continue to support the work in every way that I

can. And I wish Howard all the success in working with the new chairman. (applause)

**Howard:**

[05:00] Thank you, Gordy. I do want to just say how appreciative we are of Gordy's devotion and service to us this last year. And our regret in his not being able to continue in that capacity is assuaged by our realization that he will continue to be available to us, to provide the kind of insight and analysis that has become characteristic of him.

May I add my voice of appreciation to you, Mr. [Siskel?]. Not only does Joe Siskel bring a keen analytical ability to complex problems, but he also accompanies it with an impassioned commitment to the values that our country represents, and sees a connection between those values and our support of Israel, which is central to our own commitment to Israel.

Let me just take a couple of moments -- I know the hour is late, and I promise you I will only be three or four minutes -- to tell you how gratified we, your officers, are by the vitality of this meeting. Each of you, by being here, has made a contribution to that [06:00] vitality. The weekend has been an absolutely inspiring kind of weekend. Every one of our

sessions, I believe, has been a session which has provoked us, which has challenged us. But more important than that, has underscored what it is the American Jewish Committee is all about. And I sense, as I have heard your comments during this week, a general consensus developing and emerging in our membership at large, and in the National Executive Council which meets here, of a sense of purpose and mission, if you will, of the American Jewish Committee. And that, of course, reflects the best in our traditions.

There are two substantive matters which I would hope we would take away with us from this meeting. One is international and one is domestic. Internationally, as Israel holds its elections, let us not talk about those elections involving the question of whether democracy will survive in Israel. Let us, rather, talk in terms of those elections [07:00] showing the vitality of Israeli democracy. What is at stake is not the soul and future of Israel, as such. What is at stake is the continuing vitality of democratic institutions in those few countries that still maintain them. And of those countries, Israel is the modern metaphor. And that is important, because, for the United States of America, our commitment in the world -- as I believe Mr. Siskel, without using these terms, described it -- our commitment is to maintain the balance of the power in the world,

so that the world can survive. And our second commitment is to protect the rapidly diminishing number of free states in the world, so that the survival of the world will have an élan to it, that makes life worth living. And that's what's involved in the international scene.

Domestically, we have faced up, at this meeting, to a challenge to us domestically, in terms of the implications of the [08:00] Jackson candidacy. And I believe we have responded to it straightforwardly and in a balanced way. But that carries with it the correlative obligation that we go out into our communities and that we operate nationally in the profound understanding that what Mr. Jackson has come to represent does not represent black America, necessarily. And that black America is far more supportive of American Jews and world Jews; far more supportive of Israel; far more supportive of the mainstream values that we represent, than is reflected in the Jackson candidacy itself. And so, it is incumbent upon us to rehabilitate and restore that sense of common purpose, which has always characterized our relations with the black community, and, to a very large extent, still does. But we must not allow our proper denunciation of the implications of the Jackson candidacy to impair or thwart that ongoing relationship.

[09:00] And those are the two kind of messages that I would like to leave you with. And as I close -- and, again, thanking you for participating and contributing to this marvelous annual meeting -- let me just remind you that, as we do all of our work, we always subscribe and observe the admonition which Shakespeare expressed so well in Hamlet: that we do not lay flattering unction to our own souls. Thank you, very much, for being with us. (applause)

I overlooked one last, important, vital thing, and that is, again, to thank Adele [Rabin?] for having been the chairman of this annual planning process. (applause)

(break in audio)

**F1:**

That concludes this presentation.

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