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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 43, Folder 1, Presbyterians, 1977.

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**date** June 29, 1977  
**to** Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
**from** Rabbi A. James Rudin  
**subject**

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" The 189th General Assembly (1977) of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA calls upon the United States Government to reaffirm its support for the concept of Palestinian self-determination and to encourage the Arab states with PLO participation, to seek means for Palestinian participation in negotiations in a manner consistent with the principles of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242."

The following paragraph was deleted, "to seek means to include the PLO as the currently acknowledged spokespersons of the Palestinians, devising means to include the PLO in the negotiations."

The vote was approximately 75% to 25% in favor of the substitute motion. It was the only minority report accepted by the General Assembly.

Rev. John Craig of Houston noted that "secure and recognized boundaries for Israel" is a critical issue and Rev. Donald Hyer of Michigan declared that "the Church must not Baptize the PLO." Rev. Linda Harter said the Church must not engage in "directive politics" and that its "effectiveness in reconciliation would be undermined by the original paragraph 2-C."

AJR:FM

June 29, 1977 - 2:00 PM

Message from Mr. Phillippe

"We just at about 12:00 noon today got the resolution on the Middle East through. The minority report was adopted which put in a UN resolution 242 and a few other good things. We got everything we wanted. It was a substantial vote; it was a good vote. It was tight enough that they had to stand; it couldn't be a voice vote. Two persons managed it. John Craig spoke from the platform and Linda Harter spoke from the floor and both of them did superb jobs." Mr. Phillippe will be in touch with you sometime next week. He will be at his home this weekend, late Saturday afternoon through Sunday at least. He doesn't know about July 4th. His number is (301) 323-3888.

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the present Government of South Africa, by the United States Government, which is inconsistent with our verbal condemnations of apartheid in the United Nations, and is against our own national interests abroad";

Whereas, the 181st General Assembly (1969) called for the coordination of efforts "to press for more effective sanctions by the United Nations, the United States, and other governments economically involved in Southern Africa, against the white-dominated and colonial regimes and to urge our own government to make credible its rhetorical denunciations of the policies of South Africa by concrete, diplomatic, and economic pressure to force meaningful change in the apartheid system";

The 189th General Assembly (1977):

1. Calls upon the United States government to support more vigorously the United Nations formula for Namibian independence, clearly communicating to the South African government that its proposed solution is unacceptable; and

2. Calls for an end to any further United States public or private loans or investments in South Africa.

To implement these resolutions dealing with Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa and Namibia (Southwest Africa), the 189th General Assembly (1977):

1. Requests the Stated Clerk to convey these resolutions to appropriate governmental leaders; and

2. Endorses the eight point program of education and advocacy in relation to southern Africa adopted by the Program Agency Board attached as Appendix A.

#### Appendix A

Southern Africa Resolutions from the Minutes of the Program Agency Board, October 21-23, 1976

The Program Agency has continued to address the critical situation emerging in Southern Africa, particularly since the outbreak of riots in June in South Africa, the escalation of violent confrontation in and around Rhodesia, and the intensified international diplomatic activity related to issues of majority rule

It is appropriate, therefore, and timely that the Program Agency delineate and reinforce its efforts in support of racial justice, human rights, and self-determination in Southern Africa. Based upon established General Assembly policy, the Program Agency's responsibility will encompass the following strategy directions

I Continue and expand as necessary open communication and interpretation to the denomination through *A D., Monday Morning, Church and Society*, educational resources, news releases, etc.

A To sensitize United Presbyterians to issues in Southern Africa

B To keep them informed of the actions undertaken by the General Assembly agencies in respect to Southern Africa.

C To alert our constituency to public policy issues concerning which they should register their opinion to their elected representatives in the Federal government.

D To inform members of the United Nations activities related to Southern Africa.

II. Affirm and intensify our relationships with the white and black churches in South Africa.

III. Affirm our support for those who have become victims of the struggle for racial justice in Southern Africa, including material and moral support of nonviolent strategies and projects undertaken by those struggling for self-determination in Southern Africa.

IV Initiate in cooperation with selected judicatories, such as New York City and National Capital Union, pilot seminars, workshops, or presentations on the current situation in Southern Africa utilizing Southern African leaders residing in the area and offering staff resources.

V Support and encourage ecumenical efforts, which address the critical situation in Southern Africa through cooperation with the South Africa Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and other denominations in the United States

VI. Support Congressional action related to United States' Southern Africa policy such as:

- Enforcement of United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia (repeal of Byrd amendment, closing of Rhodesian Information Office, restriction of tourism).

- Non-recognition of the Transkei.

- Application of domestic equal opportunity employment standards for United States corporations in South Africa and elsewhere

VII. Encourage and promote consultation between South African black leaders and representatives of United States corporations which have operations in South Africa.

VIII. Affirm the intensified application of the United Presbyterian Church's investment policy guidelines in cooperation with other denominations in support of black South African criticism of United States transnational enterprises, which buttress the economic viability of the apartheid system.

## RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

### Background

The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church is desirous of the establishment of an era of peace, justice and reconciliation in the Middle East, in which the legitimate interests of all parties are protected.

The history of the Middle East conflict is long and complicated. The details of this conflict have been amply documented in the report of the 186th General Assembly (1974) entitled "The Middle East Conflict: A Presbyterian Report." The crisis has continued unabated since that report. Although the main issue involves the conflict between Israel and her Arab neighbors, other factors have affected the situation, including the tragic civil war which has devastated Lebanon, and the growing political influence of the oil powers.

The step by step diplomacy followed by the United States since the 1973 war has had some accomplishments but the basic issues remain unresolved. Pressure mounts for an overall solution, as the fragile balance of peace is maintained in ever escalating arms build-ups.

The scattered Palestinian community seeks identity, integrity and independence. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has been recognized by the Arab states and the United Nations, as the current voice and vehicle of those aspirations.

The Israeli community, sobered by its difficulties in the 1973 war for survival, still seeks an elusive peace. That community is currently in a vigorous political debate concerning the best policy for seeking peace, the stance toward the Palestinian community and the PLO, and the leadership to whom these policies should be entrusted. Since increased armaments cannot completely guarantee security, Israel always realizes that another war could be its last.

The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, deeply concerned for the right of all communities to live in peace, and the right of minorities to live in freedom, continues to share the concern of all sides of this conflict for a permanent peace in the Middle East.

### Resolution

Whereas, the resolution of the outstanding issues in the Middle East involves at least three factors:

(1) For Israel, the right to exist within secure and

recognized boundaries;

(2) For the Arab states, withdrawal of Israeli forces from territory occupied in 1967;

(3) For the Palestinians, the right to political self-determination;

Whereas, it is recognized by most parties that the critical factor at this point is the resolution of the Palestinian question, and that this cannot be done without the direct participation of the Palestinians;

Whereas, the 186th General Assembly (1974) stated "The Palestinian people should be full participants in negotiations concerning any of these matters through representatives of their own choosing";

Whereas, all major parties have indicated a desire to resolve the Middle East crisis and whereas each party feels that the commitments that it must make must be done not unilaterally but in concert with others;

Whereas, the previous periods of warfare have been at escalating levels of violence due, in part, to the availability of new military technology and hardware supplied by the major arms producers, including the United States;

Whereas, the United States government has played a major role in the Middle East in the past, by its support of Israel, and by its participation in the varying forms of negotiations which have occurred in the past;

The 189th General Assembly (1977):

1. Reaffirms its basic convictions and the appropriate strategies which were adopted by the 186th General Assembly (1974), particularly as they stem from two basic assumptions:

a. That "the right and power of Palestinian people to self-determination by political expression, based upon full civil liberties for all, should be recognized by the parties in the Middle East and by the international community."

b. And that "the right and power of Jewish people to self-determination by political expression in Israel, based upon full civil liberties for all, should be recognized by the parties in the Middle East and by the international community."

2. Calls upon the United States government:

a. To reaffirm its commitments to Israel;

b. To exercise its responsibilities as co-convenor to reconvene the negotiations in order to seek a comprehensive solution of the complex interrelated problems, respecting the right of all parties involved to participate;

c. To accept the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the currently acknowledged spokespersons of the Palestinians, devising means to include the PLO in the negotiations; and

d. To seek the cooperation of all powers in curtailing the spread of new military technologies and weapons systems in the Middle East.

3. Directs the Stated Clerk to communicate this resolution to proper government officials;

Encourages the Program Agency to continue its efforts of education and advocacy; and

Suggests that the appropriate agencies of the church make available resources to assist the victims of both the systemic and military violence.

## RESOLUTION ON LEBANON

The 189th General Assembly (1977) expresses its sincere and solemn concern for the people of Lebanon and deplores the tragic circumstances existing as a result of the catastrophic civil war which has racked the nation. The intricate and convoluted nature of the problem itself encompasses the outside tugging and pulling of foreign powers, the heterogeneous nature of the Lebanese people, and a struggle over economic and social position, interlaced with religious and ethnic diversity all present a confounding sort of patchwork. The presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the intrusion of Syria, the breakdown of both Christian and Arab communities into extreme rightist and leftist elements, all heavily armed and engaged in seesaw warfare, make our understanding most difficult.

What is clear, however, is the extensive nature of the physical destruction visited upon the land, the reality of the bloodshed and death, and the dimensions of animosity, bitterness and hostility which follow. The tragedy is indeed graphic and total.

Where there is human grief and tragedy, the church must supply a ministry of healing, consolation and friendship;

Where there has been destruction, chaos and mass confusion, the church has a role in rebuilding, restoration and reconstruction;

Where there has been alienation, friction and hatred, the church has a mission of amelioration, reconciliation and love.

Frustrated by the difficulty of defining concrete and substantive action in such a complex situation, the 189th General Assembly (1977) nonetheless:

Calls upon all Presbyterians to pray for the return of peace within the Lebanese community and for reconciliation and justice within its political and economic life;

Urges the Executive Branch and the Congress of the United States to deal generously and helpfully in abetting the restoration of order and peace to the state and peoples of Lebanon, either directly or through international organization channels;

Requests the agencies of the General Assembly to provide tangible aid (dollars or in-kind resources) through appropriate agencies, calling upon individual United Presbyterians for support as needed;

Requests the Program Agency to make available information and interpretation concerning the Lebanese situation and response to it, drawing upon information from Lebanon and other sources.

## RESOLUTION ON A CONTINUING WITNESS TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

### Background

The time has come once again for the church to speak clearly on the issue of capital punishment in our society.

For nearly ten years there were no executions in the United States because of constant and intense litigation efforts challenging the constitutionality of the death

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