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President Trump Backs 2-State Solution for Israel in Meeting with Netanyahu

By Zeke Miller & Jonathan Lemire

Time, September 26, 2018

<http://time.com/5406881/president-trump-two-state-solution-israel/>

President Donald Trump waded into thorny Middle East politics while at the United Nations on Wednesday, endorsing the two-state solution to bring an end the decades-long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians while poised to denounce the dangers posed by Iran.

Trump, a day after being greeted with laughter by world leaders still uncertain how to manage his “America First” ideology, explicitly backed Israel, leaned in on the importance of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and suggested that he saw progress on the horizon for long-delayed hopes for Middle East peace.

“I like two-state solution,” Trump said in his most clear endorsement of the plan. “That’s what I think works best.”

Meeting with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump indicated that moving the embassy was “a big chip” the U.S. delivered to the Israelis.

“I took probably the biggest chip off the table. And so obviously they have to start you know we have to make a fair deal. We have to do something. Deals have to be good for both parties.”

Trump said he believed that the embassy “was always the primary ingredient as to why deals couldn’t get done.”

“Now that’s off the table,” Trump said. “Now that will also mean that Israel will have to do something that is good for the other side.”

The two-state “solution” is mostly aspirational. Ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians over the division of territory, borders and governance has spawned violence going back years and long stymied Mideast peace efforts.

Moving the embassy from Tel Aviv triggered considerable protest from the Palestinians and expressions of condemnation from many American allies who worried about further violence that could destabilize the fragile region. Trump said that his administration’s peace plan, in part helmed by his son-in-law senior adviser Jared Kushner, would be released in the coming months.

Trump’s meeting with Netanyahu came, symbolically, just ahead of his chairing a meeting of the U.N. Security Council about nuclear proliferation. The president had suggested, in a recent tweet, that Iran could be his focus, and he unloaded harsh rhetoric the day before on the nuclear-aspirant nation as a persistent malign influence across the Middle East.

“We ask all nations to isolate Iran’s regime as long as its aggression continues,” said Trump on Tuesday. The president has removed the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, citing the country’s destabilizing actions throughout the region and support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah, and he accused its leaders on Tuesday of sowing “chaos, death and destruction.”

His national security adviser, John Bolton, went even further in a speech Tuesday, issuing a dire warning to Iran: “If you cross us, our allies or our partners; if you harm our citizens; if you continue to lie, cheat and deceive, yes, there will indeed be hell to pay,” Bolton said.

But despite his tough talk, Trump said he could envision relations with Iran moving along a similar “trajectory” as ones with North Korea. A year ago from the U.N., Trump belittled its leader Kim Jong Un as “Rocket Man” and threatened to annihilate the country but on Wednesday he touted the “the wonderful relationship” with Kim and teased that details of a second summit between the two men could be released soon.

The high-profile Security Council meeting came a day after Trump poured scorn on the “ideology of globalism” and heaped praise on his own administration’s achievements in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly that drew head shakes and even mocking laughter from his audience of fellow world leaders.

“The U.S. will not tell you how to live and work or worship,” Trump said as he unapologetically promoted his “America First” agenda. “We only ask that you honor our sovereignty in return.”

Speaking in triumphal terms, Trump approached his address to the world body as something of an annual report to the world on his country’s progress since his inauguration. He showcased strong economic numbers, declared that the U.S. military is “more powerful than it has ever been before” and crowed that in “less than two years, my administration has accomplished more than almost any administration in the history of our country.”

Just sentences into the president’s remarks, the audience began to chuckle and some leaders broke into outright laughter, suggesting the one-time reality television star’s puffery is as familiar abroad as it is at home. Trump appeared briefly flustered, then smiled and said it was not the reaction he expected “but that’s all right.”

Later he brushed off the episode, telling reporters, “Oh it was great. Well, that was meant to get some laughter so it was great.”

The leaders’ spontaneous response to Trump’s address only reinforced the American president’s isolation among allies and foes alike, as his nationalistic policies have created rifts with erstwhile partners and cast doubt in some circles about the reliability of American commitments around the world.

The laughter evoked a campaign line Trump frequently deployed against his predecessor Barack Obama — who embraced international engagement — suggesting that due to weak American leadership, “the world is laughing at us.”

In 2014, Trump tweeted, “We need a President who isn’t a laughingstock to the entire World. We need a truly great leader, a genius at strategy and winning. Respect!”

The General Assembly is four days of choreographed foreign affairs were designed to stand in contrast to a presidency sometimes defined by disorder, but they were quickly overshadowed by domestic political crises.

The fate of his second Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, was in fresh doubt after a second allegation of sexual misconduct, which Kavanaugh denies. Kavanaugh and his first accuser testify to Congress on Thursday.

Drama also swirls around the job security of Trump's deputy attorney general. Rod Rosenstein was reported last week to have floated the idea of secretly recording the president last year and to have raised the idea of using the 25th Amendment to remove him from office. He will meet with Trump at the White House, also on Thursday.

Netanyahu Rejects Invitation to UN-Sponsored Anti-Semitism Conference JTA, September 27, 2018

<https://www.jta.org/2018/09/27/news-opinion/netanyahu-rejects-invitation-un-sponsored-anti-semitism-conference>

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel rejected an invitation to participate in a United Nations conference on anti-Semitism.

The conference was held Wednesday at U.N. headquarters in New York under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, on the sidelines of the world body's General Assembly.

"While I commend all efforts to combat antisemitism, I have decided not to participate in this week's UNESCO conference on antisemitism due to the organization's persistent and egregious bias against Israel," Netanyahu said in a statement issued Wednesday. "Since 2009, UNESCO has passed 71 resolutions condemning Israel and only 2 resolutions condemning all other countries combined. This is simply outrageous."

Israel announced in late December that it would withdraw from UNESCO, several weeks after the United States announced its decision to withdraw, citing "continuing anti-Israel bias." The U.S. decision also came days after the General Assembly [passed](#) a resolution rejecting any recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in the wake of the pronouncement by President Donald Trump two weeks earlier.

In recent years, UNESCO has passed resolutions rejecting Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, and placed the Cave of the Patriarchs and the Old City of Hebron in the State of Palestine on the list of world heritage sites in danger.

The withdrawal from UNESCO by Israel and the U.S. will become official at the end of this year.

"The mark of antisemitism was once singling out the Jewish people for slander and condemnation," Netanyahu also said in his statement. "The mark of antisemitism today is singling out the Jewish state for slander and condemnation.

"If UNESCO wants to remove this mark of shame, it must do more than host a conference on antisemitism. It must stop practicing antisemitism. And it must stop the absurdity of passing resolutions which deny the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, between the Jewish people and our eternal capital Jerusalem."

On Wednesday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [in remarks to the conference](#) called on member states to recognize anti-Semitism as a problem to be addressed internationally.

"Jewish boys should not be afraid to wear yarmulkes in the streets of our cities. Jewish youth should not have to travel to school under the protection of armed military or police. Jewish cemeteries should not be desecrated," he said. "Anti-semitism has survived across the millennium but should have no place in the 21st century."

He added: "The origins of the United Nations itself are rooted in the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. Being true to our charter means combating anti-Semitism and hatred with all our energy and will."

Nazis' Aerial Photography Is Helping Map and Preserve Jewish Cemeteries

By Cnaan Lipshiz

JTA, September 26, 2018

<https://www.jta.org/2018/09/26/news-opinion/nazis-aerial-photography-helping-map-preserve-jewish-cemeteries>

When German air force pilots took aerial photographs of western Ukraine in 1941, they did it to help Nazi Germany defeat the Soviet Union in a war that saw the genocide of 6 million Jews.

But in a twist of fate, the German government has recently started funding an effort that uses the photographs to identify and preserve Jewish cemeteries.

The effort, in which the Luftwaffe archives are only one of several ingenious tools, began in 2015 with the establishment of an organization called the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative, or ESJF. The largest-ever international project of its kind, ESJF has since fenced more than 100 Jewish cemeteries in seven countries on a modest annual budget of approximately \$1 million.

And in Eastern Europe, fencing Jewish cemeteries is "not as straightforward as it may sound," according to Philip Carmel, a British former journalist, the organization's CEO since its creation.

Even determining the location of such graveyards can be challenging in towns with entire Jewish populations that were murdered and cemeteries plundered for construction material and then stolen for development.

That's where the Luftwaffe aerial photographs enter the picture, Carmel said.

"Obviously they were taken to help the German war effort," Carmel said of the prints and negatives that he pulled from German state archives. "But they were accurate enough to help us identify some Jewish cemeteries right before the destruction."

In the western Ukrainian town of Buchach — the birthplace of the Jewish Nobel Prize laureate Shmuel Yosef Agnon and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal — Jews for generations buried their dead atop a mound that in 1941 stood on the town's northern margins.

But after the murder of the area's 10,000 Jews during the Holocaust, the forest adjacent to the cemetery was allowed to swallow it up, leaving exposed only a few dozen headstones. Fragments of others used to lie in piles on the shoulders of the potholed asphalt road that snakes along Buchach's Torgova Street.

The forest's progression and the destruction caused to the headstones — locals throughout Eastern Europe steal them to use as sharpening stones or building material — complicated efforts to map the cemetery. The Luftwaffe aerials show its borders clearly, explained Carmel, who last year oversaw its demarcation. It is now set for fencing later this year, complete with retaining walls.

ESJF recently began using engineering drones that can map a Jewish cemetery in a fraction of the time and cost that a team of surveyors would require.

Fencing is crucial, Carmel said, because it prevents further damage. While it neither helps restore damage nor prevent people who are determined to get in from climbing the fence, "It shows ownership, it indicates interest and it vastly reduces the chance of vandalism," he said.

Jewish communities in Eastern Europe are struggling to maintain crumbling heritage sites from an era when the local Jewish population was many times greater than it is today, as are activists working to preserve Jewish cemeteries.

But ESJF is the best-funded and first international effort of its kind, active in an area with well over 10,000 Jewish cemeteries in various degrees of risk. And it is by far the most transparent, as per stringent reporting demands by the German treasury.

Whereas the bulk of the damage to Jewish cemeteries happened during World War II and under communism, they are still being degraded today at an alarming rate due to unregulated construction and vandalism.

Earlier this month, the construction of a state-funded sports complex in the town of Klimontow, Poland, was completed atop what activists say was a disused Jewish cemetery. Last year, a judge in Belarus cleared the way for the construction of apartments atop two former Jewish cemeteries in Gomel. And in Lithuania, the government is ignoring an international outcry over its plan to build a conference center on what used to be one Vilnius' largest cemeteries, which the communists razed.

About a quarter of all Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe were destroyed during the Nazi and Soviet periods, according to Rabbi Isaac Schapira, the Israel-based founder and chairman of the ESJF board.

"Most of those that have remained lie neglected principally because their communities were wiped out in the Holocaust," he said.

This is also the reason the German government decided to bankroll ESJF, according to Carmel.

As a rule, ESJF does not get involved in cemeteries featuring a legal or territorial dispute, like the ones in Klimontow, Gomel or Vilnius.

"Our objective is to fence as many Jewish cemeteries as possible in as little time as possible for the lowest cost," Carmel said.

Instead of duking it out with local authorities and developers, ESJF tries to find compromises.

On a recent project, ESJF even purchased a small and cheap plot of land in a small Ukrainian town so it could serve as a Christian cemetery. It was the simplest way of getting the local Orthodox church, which did not want to bury Seventh-day Adventists in its Christian cemetery, to stop burying them atop older graves at a disused Jewish cemetery, Carmel said.

When it comes to halachah, or Jewish law, ESJF is strict in observing its rules on burial, Carmel said. But whenever possible, he said, the organization tries to compromise, keeping with its view that local partnerships are the only guarantee for the organization's long-lasting impact.

"The cemeteries we fence, they are not being guarded," Carmel said. "Ultimately the only way of making sure these places don't get destroyed is to get the local population to think of their local Jewish cemetery as part of their own heritage."

One success has been in Frampol, Poland, where dozens of schoolchildren joined ESJF's fencing and cleanup of the local Jewish cemetery.

Another is the story of Katy Kryvko, a 17-year-old high school student from the Ukraine village of Derazhne, located about 100 miles north of Buchach. Two years ago Kryvko, who is not Jewish, contacted ESJF about a Jewish cemetery behind her home that the local children used as a playground.

"I was shocked when I realized that kids are playing literally at the cemetery," she told JTA. "I didn't understand why it was neglected and nobody cared about it."

Her interest in the cemetery led Kryvko to study the tragic history of the region's Jewish population, and to ESJF, which cleaned it up and fenced it last year.

“It’s so important for me because I know that I’m the only one person who can save the cemetery,” she said. “I mean, who can take care of it.”

Russian Ties with Israel under Strain

By Pavel Felgenhauer

Jamestown Foundation, September 27, 2018

<https://jamestown.org/program/russian-ties-with-israel-under-strain/>

Several Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) F-16 jets bombed and destroyed an industrial warehouse in the Syrian coastal city of Latakia, on September 17. According to Israeli sources, the warehouse contained Iranian military equipment earmarked for the militant group Hezbollah. The Russian airbase of Hmeymim is located about 25 kilometers from the destroyed target. No Russians were present at the bombed site. But just about 20 minutes after the Israeli airstrike, a Russian Il-20 electronic intelligence–gathering turboprop plane was hit and downed by a Syrian anti-aircraft S-200 missile over the Mediterranean, as it was approaching Hmeymim. All 15 Russian officers onboard the Il-20 were killed and awarded Russian state medals posthumously. Despite the intelligence aircraft being downed by a Syrian Arab Army (SAA) anti-aircraft battery, the Russian military has unequivocally blamed the IDF pilots and command for deliberately provoking the attack on a Russian plane, of undermining Russian trust, and of threatening Russian servicemen in Syria by their aggressive actions (Interfax, September 25).

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman had built up a working relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian military. Unlike most other US allies, Israel has not imposed any sanctions on Russia over Crimea, the war in Donbas, the poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury, or the alleged Russian interference in US and other Western countries’ democratic elections. The Israeli defense industry has continued to help the Russian military produce modern drones. In return, Moscow has allowed the IDF to attack Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria, inflicting casualties on the pro-Iranian forces and their SAA allies with virtual impunity. This cozy relationship seemed under mortal threat in the aftermath of the downing on the Il-20, as Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu blamed the IDF and threatened to take “retaliatory measures” after phoning Lieberman (Militarynews.ru, September 18; see EDM, September 24).

Netanyahu promptly phoned Putin to profess Israeli innocence, and a special Israeli delegation was allowed to come to Moscow to plead the IDF’s case, even as the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) publicly condemned the IDF’s treachery. These accusations incited a wave of anti-Israeli verbal attacks from Russian parliamentarians, who demanded immediate sanctions and possible retaliatory missile attacks against targets in Israel (Newsru.com, September 18). Putin somewhat calmed the waters by declaring the loss of the Il-20 was caused by a “chain of tragic circumstances,” noting that the IDF did not actually shoot down the spy plane. Putin called for a thorough investigation, though at the same time he publicly supported the defense ministry’s stance implying IDF guilt (TASS, September 18). After Putin intervened the anti-Israeli campaign in the state-controlled press and in the Russian parliament went swiftly numb. As is traditional in Russia, all had been waiting to know how the Kremlin would decide the case.

An IDF delegation led by Air Force commander General Amikam Norkin arrived in Moscow on September 20. The Israelis were not allowed into the Kremlin as they apparently wanted; instead, they were given an audience with the MoD to present a factual report at a briefing. The IDF insisted the Israeli F-16 jets released their precision-guided weapons and flew back home while the SAA batteries continued to launch long-range S-200 missiles indiscriminately, hitting the Il-20 after the IDF’s attack jets were already hundreds of kilometers away and preparing to land in Israel. The Russian military apparently listened to the IDF report politely but noncommittally (Kommersant, September 21). The Israelis left Moscow satisfied the problem was essentially resolved and that ever-closer cooperation with the Russian military in Syria would continue. Sources in the IDF told journalists in Tell Aviv, “Russia accepts our take” (Times of Israel, September 21). However, the fact that General Norkin was not allowed in the Kremlin was a bad omen that the Israeli military—ignorant of the nuances of Moscow politics—did not understand.

On September 23, after briefing Putin with no Israelis present, the MoD delivered a fresh broadside accusing the IDF of deliberately lying about the Il-20 incident and being the sole and direct party responsible. The

defense ministry showed the president computer graphics of Israeli F-16s that, instead of flying home after delivering their payload, stayed in the air between Latakia and Cyprus in range of S-200 missiles, drawing SAA fire. The Israeli jets on the video were then shown maneuvering to deliberately cause a missile to hit the Il-20. The MoD reminded how open and generous it was to the IDF, which apparently repaid its generosity with alleged spite (Militarynews.ru, September 23). Putin's Israeli-friendly policies in the Middle East have been causing much animosity in Russia's military and diplomatic establishment, which is traditionally highly anti-Semitic. The IDF, indeed, began the chain of events that led to the downing of the Il-20; but it was the Russian military that failed to properly organize the air traffic at its own Hmeymim base or to contain the trigger-happy SAA. Instead of accepting blame and punishment, Russian generals used the Il-20 case to shift the blame and redirect Russian policy in the Middle East. The MoD has essentially moved to end the tacit agreement to allow the IDF to fly and bomb Russian allies in Syria—an arrangement that had infuriated Russian military command (Novaya Gazeta, September 25).

Shoigu announced Russia will now supply the SAA with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles that it previously withheld because of Israeli objections; and he declared Russian forces would use electronic warfare to suppress GPS and communications in Latakia province and over the eastern Mediterranean, while integrating SAA anti-aircraft assets using a computerized Russian command-and-control system (Interfax, September 24). It is still unclear what number of S-300 missiles or what version will be provided. And will they be under Syrian or *de facto* Russian command?

After another phone call to the Kremlin, Netanyahu announced, "Things could have been much worse," noting an agreement had been reached to continue military contacts with the Russians (TASS, September 26). The Israeli leader ordered the stop of all IDF leaks or comment about the Il-20 incident. Meanwhile, in Russia, anti-Israeli rhetoric has diminished and the downed Il-20 has virtually disappeared from state-controlled media in Moscow. The future deployment of S-300s could be limited and not cover much of Syria. Apparently the tacit agreement between Putin and Netanyahu may have been modified, but it essentially still stands for the time being.

From Russia, with Love

By Jonathan Schwartz

The Detroit Jewish News September 27, 2018

<https://thejewishnews.com/2018/09/27/from-russia-with-love-jewish-law-misphat-ivri/>

Jonathan Schwartz's surprise trip fortified his appreciation of Jewish law and informed his worldview.

In early 2018, I received an invitation from Professor Howard Lupovitch, director of the Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies at Wayne State University, and U.S. District Court Judge Avern Cohn to attend the Jewish Law Association's (JLA) 20th International Conference in Moscow, Russia.

The JLA is an international organization of lawyers, legal scholars and judges (including Cohn) that works to promote the study and research of Jewish law. A few years prior, Judge Cohn expressed an interest in connecting the Jewish Bar Association of Michigan (JBAM), an organization I co-founded in 2014 and currently serve as president, with the JLA to help form bonds between Michigan's Jewish legal community and others across the world.

As grateful as I was for the opportunity, I had reservations about traveling to Moscow given the current political climate and the state of U.S./Russia relations. Like many Americans on both sides of the aisle, I've been outraged by reports of Russian government meddling in the 2016 election among other activities on the world stage. Despite my concerns, I was excited to participate, meet Jewish legal practitioners and academics from around the world, and visit a country spotlighted in the news every day.

MISHPAT IVRI

As it turned out, the conference location was deliberate and important. One hundred years ago, during a Russian renaissance, a group of Russian Jews, running the spectrum of religious to secular, formed the Mishpat Ivri Society. Mishpat Ivri is a field of legal scholarship examining the similarities, differences and

interplay between traditional Jewish law (Halachah) — primarily based upon the Torah, laws and opinions issued by rabbis (often functioning as judges) and long-standing Jewish customs — and secular modern laws.

The study of Mishpat Ivri also aids in the effort to utilize Jewish law to inform and shape current legal decisions and lawmaking, although whether and to what extent that should be done has been a topic of contention since the Mishpat Ivri Society's founding.

Mishpat Ivri scholarship should be recognized as playing an **integral part** in Jewish history, **wisdom** and identity.

— Jonathan Schwartz

Mishpat Ivri scholarship covers various legal subjects, from family to criminal law, business law, contracts and real estate, to personal injury and international law, among others. The study of Jewish law and its connection to secular law continues at law schools around the world, primarily in places with strong Jewish communities and where educational institutions see the benefit of tapping into historical religious legal sources. For example, the Center for the Study of Law and Religion, Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, one of the JLA conference sponsors, offers classes taught by experts in Jewish, Christian and Islamic law.

Outside the ivory tower of academia, Jewish law and Mishpat Ivri are being utilized by judges to decide cases in the real world to varying degrees. In Israel, where Mishpat Ivri played a key role in establishing the country's legal system, nearly 10 percent of decisions from the Israeli Supreme Court reference Jewish law scholarship.

The rich body of Jewish law generated over our history is an incredible, yet undervalued treasure trove of Jewish wisdom, which deserves continued attention and study. That is the essence of Mishpat Ivri. For these reasons, the JLA made the decision to honor and highlight the Mishpat Ivri Society on its 100th anniversary.

IMPRESSIONS OF MOSCOW

After several months of working through the visa process and making travel arrangements, I took the long flight to Moscow, arriving in the afternoon on Sunday, July 22. The conference was to begin the next afternoon, so I had plenty of time to explore the city. While I imagined run-down apartment blocks, unhappy and downtrodden people and an imposing military presence, the reality was much different.

Moscow, an enormous city of more than 13 million residents, turned out to be beautiful, modern, clean and safe. The streets were alive with activity, filled with tourists who remained after the recent World Cup soccer tournament.

While it was impossible to miss the seven sisters — imposing Stalinist-style skyscrapers built in the late '40s and early '50s that ring the city — there were few other outward signs of the country's communist past. Instead, capitalism was in full swing. Moscow has many high-end stores catering to wealthy and fashionable Muscovites, and countless small businesses selling Matryoshka dolls, replica Fabergé eggs and more.

Russian millennials were everywhere, looking identical to young people in any U.S. city. Despite reported government-sponsored discrimination, I was proud to see LGBTQ couples openly showing their affection, including in Russia's famous Red Square. Locals filled the city's many parks, strolled the manicured path by the Moskva River (similar to the Detroit RiverWalk) that includes a skate park, and enjoyed the many bars and restaurants. While traditional Russian food was readily available, the McDonald's, Starbucks, Hard Rock Cafe and Hollywood-themed diner were always full.

While guidebooks warned that Russians were unfriendly and intentionally stoic in public, I did not encounter any unpleasantness. Most people spoke English and were happy to help. I never saw any machine gun-toting soldiers and never felt as though government informants were hiding in the shadows. I was treated respectfully by everyone during the trip. Importantly, when traveling as an easily identifiable Jewish group, nobody experienced a hint of discrimination.

LA CONFERENCE

On July 23, conference participants met at Moscow State University's (MSU) Law School. MSU is considered the most prestigious university in Russia, and its campus includes the largest educational building in the world (one of the seven sisters), in addition to a modern law school. Along with the JLA, MSU and Emory University's Law School, other conference sponsors included the Buchmann Faculty of Law at Tel Aviv University, the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress and the Embassy of the State of Israel in Moscow.

We were greeted by a banner displaying the formal title of the conference: "Mishpat Ivri: Past, Present and Future. 100 Year Anniversary of the Establishment of the Mishpat Ivri Society in Moscow."

Attendees came from Austria, Brazil, Israel, Russia, South Africa, and a handful from the U.S. I was the only Midwest participant. Most were lawyers and legal scholars, but the group also included historians, authors, rabbis and government officials, such as Israeli Supreme Court Justice Daphne Barak-Erez and Israel's Ambassador to Russia Gary Koren. Media was also present to cover the conference, the first of its kind in Russia.

Religious observance varied but tended to skew more Modern Orthodox than Reform. At 35, I was on the younger end, causing one American law professor to explain that the study of Mishpat Ivri is usually undertaken by professors after they obtain tenure and are free to engage in passion projects. Presenters included a mix of men and women, many of whom brought family members who joined us at various activities and meals. Despite these differences, this diverse group of Jews enjoyed eating kosher Russian food, praying, and discussing religion and law together.

The important BDS-rejecting message sent by Russia's preeminent academic institution hosting a Jewish Law conference, with many Israeli academics in attendance, deserves to be recognized, encouraged and celebrated. To my surprise, we were not faced with one anti-Israel protester — a nice departure from the campus environment at many U.S. colleges and universities, including several in Michigan.

HIGHLIGHTS

The lectures and panel discussions were fascinating. Presenters traced the history and use of Jewish law and study over thousands of years, including the current use of Mishpat Ivri scholarship by Israeli judges. Panels covered a variety of legal topics, showing how legal theory developed in Jewish law could be utilized to inform modern judicial decisions and help resolve current disputes.

Importantly, attendees also did not shy away from criticizing anti-Jewish discrimination by the Russian government and society in the past, or the disparate impact that restrictions on religion in general are having today on Moscow's Jewish community. A Russian attorney passionately explained that a recent law discouraging "missionary activity" has been unfairly applied by certain local police and prosecutors against Jews wearing yarmulkes, and advocated for legislation further protecting the Jewish community.

The group also took a guided walking tour of Moscow; visited a museum to see artwork by Jewish artists murdered under the post-WWII Stalinist regime; dined at the Choral Synagogue of Moscow, where Golda Meir, the first Israeli representative to the Soviet Union, paid unannounced visits to celebrate the High Holy Days in 1948; and attended a gala at the Jewish Museum.

During conference breaks, I visited the Kremlin fortress, which houses the presidential residence and functions as the government headquarters, took a scenic tour of the Moskva River and stopped at history and art museums.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

After several weeks of processing the trip, I have several takeaways.

- The study of Jewish law and Mishpat Ivri is important and deserves more attention. Much like Jewish art (Marc Chagall was part of the Russian renaissance at the time of the Mishpat Ivri society), music, movies and food, Jewish law and Mishpat Ivri scholarship should be recognized as playing an integral part in Jewish history, wisdom and identity.

- Metro Detroit, filled with some of the brightest Jewish minds in the world, should play an important role in its study and discussion, in addition to debates over its application to current legal issues. Consequently, I will be working with the Cohn-Haddow Center, the JLA and JBAM to host events and bring in relevant speakers, including participants in the JLA conference. In the future, Michigan law schools should consider hiring a full-time Jewish law professor who can teach and produce scholarship on Mishpat Ivri (in addition to scholars studying other faiths' legal traditions).
- Moscow was very different from the authoritarian society I had envisioned, and the lives of people in Russia are not so different from our own. While we should continue to take a firm stand against harmful conduct of the Russian government — especially attempts to interfere with U.S. politics — and advocate for increased protection of Russia's Jewish minority, it is also important to build bridges with the Russian people, who can make positive change from within. We should also applaud positive behavior, including the Russian government's cooperation with Israel and rejection of the anti-Israel BDS movement exemplified by hosting the JLA conference.
- There are international Jewish legal professionals who want to work together to accomplish larger common goals for the Jewish people. At the conference, I discussed and received offers to help with JBAM's recently launched initiative to help recover still-unreturned artwork looted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.
- I plan to attend JLA conferences in the future and will encourage other Jewish lawyers from this community to attend as well.

**Polish, Israeli Leaders Talk Military Cooperation, Syria
Radio Poland, September 27, 2018**

<http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/384475,Polish-Israeli-leaders-talk-military-cooperation-Syria>

Bilateral ties and Polish-Israeli military cooperation and the war in Syria were the main talking points during a meeting between Polish President Andrzej Duda and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The pair met while at the United Nations in New York.

Netanyahu gave Duda his opinion about the situation in the Middle East, especially about migration threats as the war in Syria continues, according to the Polish president's chief of staff, Krzysztof Szczerski.

The pair also expressed hope for Polish-Israeli partnership on trade, especially the exchange of modern technologies, Szczerski said.

"They also discussed potential military cooperation," Szczerski added.

Earlier during his trip to New York, Duda talked with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Duda also took part in a UN Security Council session, headed by US president Donald Trump, about stopping the spread of atomic weapons and the Iran's nuclear programme.

**U.S., Ukrainian Officials Discuss Efforts to Counter Russia's 'Malign Influence'
RFERL, September 26, 2018**

<https://www.rferl.org/a/u-s-ukrainian-officials-discuss-efforts-to-counter-russia-s-malign-influence-/29510270.html>

A top U.S. official has met with the Ukrainian foreign minister in New York to discuss "cooperative efforts against Russia's malign influence," among other things, the State Department says.

A statement said the September 25 meeting between U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly also touched upon

Russia's "use of energy projects to extort and intimidate Ukraine and other European allies," as well as Kyiv's progress in implementing political and economic reforms.

Sullivan reiterated that the United States "will never recognize Russia's attempted annexation" of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and reaffirmed "strong U.S. support" for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, according to the statement.

Relations between Moscow and the West have deteriorated to a post-Cold War low over issues including Russia's seizure of Crimea in March 2014, its role in wars in Syria and eastern Ukraine, its alleged election meddling in the United States and Europe, and the poisoning of a Russian double agent and his daughter in Britain in March.

Fighting between Ukrainian government forces and Russia-backed separatists has killed more than 10,300 in eastern Ukraine since April 2014.

Moscow's support for the separatists and its illegal annexation of Crimea prompted the United States, the European Union, and others to impose sanctions on Russia.

Washington has also threatened to impose sanctions over the construction of an underwater natural gas pipeline to deliver Russian natural gas directly to Germany under the Baltic Sea, circumventing the traditional route through Ukraine.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on September 25, U.S. President Donald Trump said that Germany "will become totally dependent on Russian energy if it does not immediately change course" on the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which aims to double the capacity of an already existing pipeline.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was scheduled to address the assembly later in the day.

Former SS Guard, 94, to Go on Trial over Deaths of Hundreds of Prisoners at Stutthof Camp JTA, September 25, 2018

<https://www.jta.org/2018/09/25/news-opinion/former-ss-guard-94-go-trial-deaths-hundreds-prisoners-stutthof-camp>

A former SS guard, now 94, will go on trial on charges of complicity in the mass murders of several hundred prisoners at the Stutthof Nazi concentration camp.

The regional court of Muenster in western Germany on Friday ordered the unnamed man to be tried before a juvenile court beginning on November 6. He was not yet 21 at the time of the murders.

He is accused of complicity in the murders of several hundred camp prisoners between 1942 and 1945.

This includes more than 100 Polish prisoners gassed to death on June 21 and 22, 1944, and "probably several hundred" Jewish prisoners August to December 1944, the French news agency AFP reported.

Prosecutors say that the man knew about the murders at the Nazi camp the camp and that the guards were essential to the killings.

He must still be determined to be fit to stand trial, according to the report.

The 2011 conviction in Munich of former concentration camp guard John Demjanjuk as an accomplice in the murders of nearly 30,000 Jews in the Sobibor death camp in Poland set a precedent in that being a guard at a death camp was sufficient to prove complicity in murder.

Pope Francis Says Snuff Out 'Any Whiff' of Resurgent anti-Semitism
Haaretz, September 24, 2018

<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/pope-francis-says-snuff-out-any-whiff-of-resurgent-anti-semitism-1.6494707>

Pope Francis said on Sunday that society should be vigilant for "any whiff" of resurgent anti-Semitism, calling for new generations to be taught the horrors of the Holocaust.

He made his appeal in Kaunas, Lithuania's second city, on the 75th anniversary of the wartime liquidation of the ghetto in the capital Vilnius. Two years of Nazi oppression in which tens of thousands of Jews were killed or deported culminated on Sept. 23-24, 1943.

"The Jewish people suffered insults and cruel punishments," Francis told a crowd of about 100,000 at an open-air Mass.

"Let us ... ask the Lord to give us the gift of discernment to detect in time any seed of that pernicious attitude, any whiff of it that can taint the heart of generations that did not experience those times," he said.

Francis, who was due to visit a monument to the ghetto victims later, was using the anniversary to make a broader appeal beyond Lithuania, a papal aide said.

Reports of anti-Semitic acts have increased in Europe, coinciding with the rise of populist, right-wing parties in a number of countries.

In May, Germany reported 1,504 anti-Semitic offences for 2017, up from 1,468 in 2016. The previous month, thousands of Germans wearing skull caps took part in nationwide rallies in support of the Jewish community.

France was shocked in March by the murder a Holocaust survivor in a suspected anti-Semitic attack, and Britain's main opposition Labour Party is embroiled in an anti-Semitism row.

More 200,000 Lithuanian Jews were murdered by the Nazis, aided by some locals. The country's Jewish community today numbers about 3,000.

In the homily of the Mass, Francis referred to those who collaborated with the Nazis in World War Two or with Communist authorities in the period between 1944 and 1991 when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union.

"Earlier generations still bear the scars of the period of the occupation, anguish at those who were deported, uncertainty about those who never returned, shame for those who were informers and traitors," he said.

On Sunday afternoon the pope was visiting the Museum of Occupations and Fights for Freedom, a former Soviet KGB prison in Vilnius where hundreds were murdered and thousands, including many priests, shipped off to Siberia.

From Russia with Love-Hate: Israeli Ties with Moscow have Always Been Complex
The Times of Israel, September 25, 2018

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/from-russia-with-love-hate-ties-with-moscow-have-always-been-complex/>

From a honeymoon in the years after Israel's founding, to strained ties after the mistaken downing of a Russian plane in Syria, relations between Israel and Russia have gone through several periods of tensions.

These have mainly revolved around disagreements on Middle Eastern issues.

In November 1947 the Soviet Union's government accepted the United Nations plan to split the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, one Jewish, the other Arab.

It became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Israel after its creation in May 1948.

In May 1949 Moscow voted in favor of Israel's admission to the UN.

24-year rupture

In June 1967, the Soviet Union broke off relations with Israel following the 1967 Six Day War, during which Israel captured territory from Jordan and Soviet allies Egypt and Syria.

Moscow went on to arm and fund Arab countries for several decades.

A rapprochement started in August 1986, with a first official contact in Helsinki between Israeli and Soviet consular delegations.

In October 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev reestablished diplomatic relations, two months before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

He authorized Jews to emigrate freely. Over a decade more than one million of them moved to Israel.

In April 1994, prime minister Yitzhak Rabin made an official visit to Moscow, the first by an Israeli premier, enshrining the full normalization of bilateral relations.

Meetings

In September 2001, then prime minister Ariel Sharon and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Moscow and jointly condemned terrorism, of which both countries say they are victims.

The positions of the Kremlin and the Israelis had grown closer since the Russian offensive in its separatist republic of Chechnya, where Moscow said it was fighting terrorism.

Israel for its part was embroiled at the time in the Second Intifada, during which Palestinians launched terror attacks and suicide bombings on Israeli civilians and population centers.

In April 2005, Putin made a historic visit to Israel against the background of a disagreement over Moscow's sale of anti-aircraft missiles to Syria.

A year later, the nuclear program of Israel's arch enemy Iran dominated the first visit to Moscow of prime minister Ehud Olmert.

Cooperation

In June 2008, Russian giant Gazprom said it was examining possible deliveries of gas to Israel.

In September 2010, the Russian and Israeli defense ministers signed an accord in Moscow on military cooperation. This cooperation had already manifested itself in 2009 in the sale to Russia of Israeli drones.

Israel has regularly expressed concerns over Russian arms sales, notably to Iran and Syria.

Contacts have since been stepped up, with Putin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meeting three times since the beginning of 2018.

Coordination 'mechanism' for Syria

In September 2015, Netanyahu met Putin in Moscow. The prime minister said after the meeting the two countries had agreed on a mechanism to coordinate their military actions in war-torn Syria, so as to avoid “misunderstandings” between their forces.

On September 30, the Russian air force launched a campaign of airstrikes in support of Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose forces were struggling against rebels.

In October, Russia said a hotline had been set up with Israel to ensure there will be no clashes between their air forces.

Israel, which has sought to keep its distance from the Syrian conflict while also defending its interests, has since 2013 carried out strikes on targets tied to Syrian ally Iran, its Lebanese ally Hezbollah and in some cases the Syrian regime.

Russian plane downed

On September 17, 2018 Syrian air defenses mistakenly downed a Russian Ilyushin Il-20 military plane over the Mediterranean, killing all 15 crew members, as Israel carried out a raid on a facility in the coastal city of Latakia that the IDF said was going to provide weapons to the Hezbollah terror group and other Iranian proxies.

A day later during a telephone call, Netanyahu expressed to Putin his “sorrow” at the downing. Putin said it was the result of “tragic accidental circumstances.”

Russia’s military on Sunday blamed “misleading” information from the Israeli Air Force for the incident.

And on Monday Moscow said it planned to supply the Syrian military with the advanced S-300 air-defense system and jam radars of nearby warplanes.

Putin told Netanyahu he rejected the Israeli version of events, blaming “the actions by the Israeli Air Force.”

Netanyahu said he was confident of the Israeli account and warned Putin against “transferring advanced weapons systems” to Syria.