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ISRAEL ACCEPTS U. N. INVITATION TO MEET WITH JORDAN IN JERUSALEM

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The Israel Government today informed the United Nations that it accepts the invitation for direct Israel-Jordan talks extended to both governments by UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold. A statement to this effect was presented today to Mr. Hammarskjold by Mordecai Kidron, deputy head of the Israel delegation to the United Nations.

In its statement, Israel urged the UN Secretary General to start the talks as early as possible. At a press conference here today Mr. Hammarskjold said that he could decide on a date which would suit himself, but that he felt as there were three parties involved--Israel, Jordan and Mr. Hammarskjold--the others should be consulted.

"I hope Jordan will accept the invitation to the conference," Mr. Hammarskjold said. However, if Jordan refused, he indicated that he would set a date. "Sometime, perhaps not in our generation, there must be peace in the Middle East but there are too many unresolved problems to bring it about now," he declared. For that reason, he said, the conference did not aim at initiating any peace talks. He indicated that he had asked that the agenda be considered within the framework of the conference "to prevent a sterile argument" as had developed at the Panmunjom negotiations.

Agenda of Conference to be Fixed at First Meeting

In its communication today, the Israel Government expressed the hope that under Mr. Hammarskjold's chairmanship, the two parties will overcome the problems of procedure and agenda "without difficulty." "The Government of Israel hopes that in their discussion of the procedure and agenda the two parties will agree to assume direct responsibility for the conduct of the conference," the communication stated.

"If, in your view, Jerusalem is the most suitable venue for the conference the Government of Israel would suggest that meetings be held in the Israel and Jordan parts of the city alternatively," the statement continued, "the Government of Israel would wish the conference to be held the earliest date compatible with your convenience," it concluded.

Dr. Bunche Named Head of U. N. Body to Study Jordan River Plans

The appointment of an inter-department committee under Dr. Ralph Bunche to study the various plans for the use of the Jordan River waters was announced here today by Secretary General Hammarskjold.

He told a press conference that the committee, which would be within the UN secretariat, would take into consideration the political aspects of these plans--the Yarmuk plan, the Israeli plan and the so-called TVA plan. Mr. Hammarskjold indicated that the study was only for the benefit and information of the Secretary General.

ISRAEL'S EXTERNAL DEBT IS \$406,000,000; SUM INCLUDES ISRAEL BONDS

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- Israel's external debt stood at \$406,000,000 at the end of December, 1953, Pinchas Saphir, director of the Israel Treasury, told a press conference today. This included all government commitments and government-underwritten loans by national institutions, but did not include some \$35,000,000 in commercial credit channels.

The sum included \$141,000,000 in Independence Bonds, Mr. Saphir said. He said that the foreign debt had been reduced by \$6,000,000 at the end of December and that it was expected that it would be reduced by a further \$20,000,000 by June of this year, after the receipt of foreign currency in payment for citrus exports.

An analysis of the debt shows that the proportion of long-term debts within the total is increasing while the proportion of the debt in short-term and middle-term obligations is dropping. In 1954, Israel is obligated to pay some \$111,000,000 in debts, of which \$73,000,000 is in short-term obligations and the remainder represents payments on capital and interest on long-term obligations.

Mr. Saphir said that short-term obligations still weigh heavily on Israel, despite American grants-in-aid and technical assistance. He added that if the "consolidation" loan being raised by American Jewish communities is as successful as early reports indicate, the foreign exchange situation will be eased and will save Israel an estimated \$8,000,000 annually in interest rates and in better terms for purchases abroad.

BRITISH AMBASSADOR LAUDS ISRAEL'S ARMY; ADDRESSES ZIONISTS

LONDON, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The fine training and discipline of the Israeli soldiers "must bear fruit if it is ever put to the test," Sir Francis Evans, British Ambassador to Israel, declared here last night at a reception tendered in his honor by the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and the British section of the Keren Hayesod.

Sir Francis told the assembled Zionist leaders that from the moment he stepped on Israel's soil he felt at home. He said he had been surprised during his 28 months of service in Israel to find no bitterness against Britain and stressed that he had never met anything but the greatest friendliness in the Jewish State.

He said that an observer could not help but be fascinated by the "remarkable sociological developments" taking place in Israel nor could he fail to be moved by the reception of immigrants from all over the world, a reception unequalled anywhere else in the world. The British Ambassador had high praise for the leaders of the State of Israel whom he called selfless in their devotion to duty. He added that he felt that the most impressive experience of all in Israel was to see the treatment given the children, the "great investment for the future."

Sir Francis spoke highly of Eliahu Elath, Israel Ambassador in London, who was present at the reception. Ambassador Elath, for his part, paid tribute to the tactful, sympathetic and understanding manner in which Sir Francis had served in Israel.

JEWISH AGENCY TREASURER LEAVES FOR U.S.; WILL STAY SEVEN WEEKS

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- Dr. George Josephthal, Jewish Agency treasurer and head of the Israeli corporation which handles German reparations goods, left for the United States today to spend seven weeks in connection with the United Jewish Appeal's 1954 campaign and the \$75,000,000 five-year loan which the American Jewish communities are raising to provide Israel with ready cash.

En route to the United States, Dr. Josephthal will meet with Dr. F. E. Shinnar, head of the Israeli purchasing mission in Germany, in Paris. He will also confer with Jewish Agency officials in Paris.

MOSCOW STARTS SURVEY OF JEWS WHO MAY WISH TO GO TO ISRAEL

NEW YORK, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- High Soviet authorities have ordered a special survey to establish how many Jews in the USSR are interested in Israel and how many of them are inclined to emigrate to Israel, a report published in today's Jewish Daily Forward from its Moscow correspondent states. The report says the following method is being applied:

1. A check is being made on the number of letters arriving from Israel in the USSR and the number of letters sent from there to Israel.
2. A check is also being made on the number of Jews attending synagogues on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays in various Soviet cities.
3. The large libraries are being checked to establish how many Jews request books in Yiddish or in Hebrew.
4. Figures are being compiled on Jews who during the last 20 years have been marked by the Soviet political police as Zionists and nationalists.
5. An investigation is being made on the number of Jews still held in slave labor camps and in Soviet jails, and special attention is paid to how many of them were arrested as Zionists or pro-Zionists.

The report says that the Soviet authorities hope that on the basis of this study it will be possible to estimate the approximate number of Jews in the USSR who can be considered candidates for immigration to Israel.

U.S. ASKS IRAQ TO RELEASE THREE ISRAELIS ARRESTED IN BAGDAD

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The United States Government has taken steps to help free three Israeli citizens who have been kept in a Bagdad jail for several weeks after a British plane in which they were flying to Iran was forced down in Iraq.

Through Ambassador Burton Berry, American envoy to Iraq, our "good offices are being brought into play," a State Department official told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today. In addition, he said, the International Red Cross is trying to persuade the Iraqi Government to release the prisoners, an elderly couple and the wife of an Israeli bank manager. The U.S. position now is one of waiting for results of its effort, it was stated.

U.N. URGED TO ESTABLISH "WORKING PARTY" OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

PARIS, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- A proposal for the establishment of a "working party" of religious organizations enjoying recognized non-governmental status with the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization, was discussed here at the fourth annual meeting of UNESCO-recognized non-governmental organizations which concluded today.

Among the Jewish groups present at the annual meeting were the Agudas Israel, World Union for Progressive Judaism, Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, World ORT Union, World Jewish Congress and World Union of Jewish Students.

The organizations interested in an interdenominational "working party" to protect religious interests were Agudas Israel, World Union for Progressive Judaism, Friends World Committee, Catholic Pax Romana, and the Commission of Churches on International Affairs.

UNION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ITALY ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

ROME, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- Dr. Giorgio Zevi has been elected president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities at a meeting of the council of the Union. He succeeds Dr. Renzo Bonfiglioli, who resigned more than three months ago over a dispute with the majority of the council. Dr. Zevi is well known in the community for his work in the underground during the war in aiding Italian and foreign Jews stranded in Italy.

JEWISH COMMITTEE IN BRAZIL REFUSES TO AID IMMIGRANTS; J. D. C. ACTS

SAO PAULO, Brazil, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The Emergency Committee for New Immigrants in this city has been forced to close its doors by the problems attendant upon the arrival of more than 1,000 Jewish immigrants who include members of all age groups, including many children, and a number of seriously ill and handicapped immigrants.

The Emergency Committee, after it closed down, handed the problem to Dr. Julius Lomnitz, Latin American director of the Joint Distribution Committee, as the only representative of a responsible world Jewish organization on the spot. Dr. Lomnitz has managed to keep the leaders of the Emergency Committee together, so that the immigrants are not completely stranded upon arrival. He has also asked his organization for trained field workers from Europe to assist in handling the newcomers.

The Emergency Committee is composed of a small group of community leaders under the sponsorship of the Jewish Federation. Sao Paulo is carrying the main burden of the immigration to Brazil because, unlike Rio de Janeiro, it receives all Jewish immigrants regardless of the reasons for their coming, whether through the JDC, HIAS or on their own.

The Central Zionist body in Rio de Janeiro has ordered all Zionists in Brazil not to help Israeli returnees and the Jewish Federation in Rio complied with this order. Now, explanations are expected from the Israel Government regarding the contradictory attitude of the Israeli mission in Germany and the Zionist body in Brazil on this problem.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR SALE OF ISRAEL BONDS FORMED

NEW YORK, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The formation of an international committee to initiate the sale of State of Israel Bonds throughout the free world, was announced today by Henry Montor, vice-president of the Israel Bond Organization, on his return from Europe and Israel, which he visited at the invitation of Prime Minister Moshe Sharett.

While in Jerusalem, Mr. Montor and Mr. Sharett discussed Israel's program of economic growth, and prepared plans for the launching of Israel's second Bond Issue--the Development Issue--which will be floated in the United States about April 1. The new Bond Issue will seek to raise \$75,000,000 during 1954, and is part of a larger issue of \$350,000,000 to be sold during the next few years.

Mr. Montor indicated that the formation of the international committee for the sale of Israel Bonds was decided upon during discussions with the Israel Prime Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Foreign Minister. These discussions, Mr. Montor reported, resulted in complete agreement on all phases of Israel Bond activity, in the United States and other lands.

Following his conferences with the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Montor visited Italy, France and England to explore the formation of Israel Bond campaign organizations in these countries. He reported that campaign committees have already been set up in Holland and Switzerland, and will soon be functioning in Italy, France, England and the Scandinavian countries.

Israel Bond campaigns have been proceeding during the past year in Canada and a number of Latin American countries, the Israel Bond vice-president added. He noted that branch offices of the Israel Bond Organization are being set up in Paris, France and Montevideo, Uruguay.

STUDY OF COMMUNITY TRENDS CONDUCTED BY AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The American Jewish Committee today made public a summary of a preliminary report on a study of the Jewish Community of Trenton, New Jersey, conducted by its Scientific Research Department. The survey established the following:

1. Overwhelmingly Jews, young and old, wish to retain their Jewish identity and to maintain a Jewish community within the framework of American society.
2. The majority of Jews, young and old, feel more comfortable with Jews than with non-Jews. Adolescents, however, accept the non-Jew more easily than do their parents even though they, like the latter, reject intermarriage in a large majority of cases.
3. The large majority of Jews, young and old, have at one time or another in their lives experienced anti-Semitism. In most cases it was of the "name calling" variety. In fewer instances other varieties of prejudice or discrimination were met.
4. Most of the Jews interviewed, when asked to define Jewishness, replied in terms of religion. Eight out of ten adults and 97 percent of the teen-agers replied in these terms. Apparently the gradual disappearance or weakening of older symbols of identification with Jewishness has intensified the search for other forms of belonging. Religion appears to offer such a symbol to many teen-agers.
5. On the subject of Israel, 94 percent of those interviewed expressed generally warm, favorable attitudes. However, very few (only seven percent) expressed any desire to live in Israel. This is true of both adults and children.

SHABAN PRIZES FOR JEWISH CULTURE ANNOUNCED; SIX WINNERS NAMED

NEW YORK, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The winners of six 1953 prizes of the Shaban Foundation for the best essays, pedagogic literature and work of Jewish artists were announced here today by the World Congress of Jewish Culture at a reception tendered to Abel Shaban, Jewish philanthropist of Johannesburg, who together with his wife Sarah, established the Shaban Foundation to promote Jewish culture.

The first prize for an essay, on relations between Israel and Jews in other countries, went to Dr. Emanuel Pat of New York. The second prize went to Abraham Golomb for an essay on the same subject. The winner of the first prize in art was the Jewish painter Itzhak Lichtenstein, while the second prize for art went to Isaac Friedlander. The first prize for Jewish pedagogic literature was won by Ch. Bez and the second went to Yudi Mark, both of New York. The first prize carries \$250 and the second prize is worth \$150.

Replying to greetings from prominent Jewish writers and leaders of the World Congress of Jewish Culture, Mr. Shaban said that his interest in promoting Jewish literature and art goes back to the time when he was himself an active Jewish journalist and editor of the Jewish newspaper in South Africa. One of the leading industrialists in the country now, Mr. Shaban reviewed current Jewish cultural life in South Africa and placed stress, in his report, on Jewish educational activities.

YOUNG PEOPLES LEAGUE URGES U.S. NOT TO SEND ARMS TO ARABS

NEW YORK, Feb. 24. (JTA) -- The national board of the Young Peoples League of the United Synagogue of America, the organization of the Conservative religious movement, adopted a resolution calling upon the State Department to deny further aid to the Arab states until they fulfill their obligations to Israel and negotiate the peace treaty they have delayed so long.

The resolution also calls upon the leaders of the government to remove from positions of power and policy those formulators of foreign policy who, showing themselves enemies of Israel, have also shown themselves enemies of a peaceful and democratic Near East.