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Israel Govt. Weighs Position on Egyptian Moves to Clear Part of Suez Canal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Members of Israel's Cabinet were considering behind closed doors today whether or not to take steps to prevent Egypt from clearing the southern end of the Suez Canal in order to free 15 merchant ships stranded there since last June.

This was the subject of consultations between the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defense following notification from Lt. Gen. Odd Bull that Egypt intends to start clearing operations next Saturday. Gen. Bull is the chief of the U.N. cease fire observers corp in the Middle East.

His letter, submitted to the Israel Government yesterday, gave no details of the Egyptian plans nor did it mention the provisions of the Israel-Egyptian cease fire agreement under which neither side is permitted to use or work in the Suez Canal without the approval of the other. Israel considers this provision to be the basis for any contact with Egypt on the matter. The latter's failure to consult Israel or to provide details of the manpower and equipment to be used in clearing the canal is considered by Israel to be a dangerous precedent for use of the canal. The Cabinet will decide whether the danger is sufficient to prevent Egypt from going ahead with the operation or whether to permit it and not risk angering world opinion.

Gen. Bull met today with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Chaim Bar-Lev on the question of the stranded ships. Gen. Dayan said Israel had to have a detailed breakdown of the number of men and the equipment the Egyptians plan to use. Egypt's reply is required before Saturday when they intend to commence clearing the canal.

Congress Leaders Say Administration Fails to Give Israel Adequate Support

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Members of Congress of both parties today charged the Administration with failure to meet the growing Soviet challenge in the Middle East and asserted that preoccupation with Viet Nam has spread U.S. forces so thin that the Communists are tempted to push in other areas.

Sen. Stuart Symington, Mis. Dem. who served as U.S. Air Force Secretary, voiced apprehension over over-commitment in Viet Nam in connection with the bold North Korean seizure of a U.S. Navy ship. In this connection, he referred also to the dangerous Soviet role in the Mediterranean and contended that U.S. defense resources may be spread too thin because of Viet Nam to meet Communist diversions in the Middle East.

Chairman J. W. Fulbright of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said developments in the Middle East made it "clear" that America was "over-committed" in Viet Nam, lessening influence "everywhere else."

Senate Republican Whip Thomas H. Kuchel, who substituted for Senate Minority Leader Everett M. Dirksen on a GOP "State of the Union" program, said the USSR was exploiting Administration foreign policy weaknesses by moving into the Middle East. He said the Russians were "playing off" American support of Israel against Arab extremism.

Rep. Seymour Halpern, New York Rep., said "the failure of the Administration to immediately authorize the sale of Phantom jets to Israel indicates to Moscow and the Arabs the weakness of the U.S. position in the Middle East and tempts further Russian naval buildup in the Mediterranean and movement of arms and advisors to Egypt and Syria." He said the Russians have obviously grown bolder in efforts to penetrate and dominate in that area because the Administration has failed to meet the very minimum responsibility of providing necessary defensive arms to Israel, a prime target of the Communists and extremist Arabs. There is no excuse for delaying the sale of the Phantom jet to Israel."

In Tel Aviv, an American-Israel defense pact to serve as a deterrent to a new outbreak of war in the Middle East was proposed by Rep. Claude Pepper (Dem.) of Florida who arrived with a group of Miami Jewish leaders. Rep. Pepper said he would also like to see the United Nations organize a "peace defense union" to protect small nations like Israel.

Communist Parley Rejects Proposal U.S. and Soviet Fleets Quit Mediterranean

ROME, Jan. 24 (JTA)--A suggestion that both the United States and the Soviet fleets quit the Mediterranean in the interests of peace in the area was reportedly made by the Yugoslavian delegation at a conference here of the "progressive" (Communist) parties of the Mediterranean nations. The conference, held behind closed doors, was called to consider the situation in the Mediterranean region following the "imperialist aggression" of last June. The Yugoslavian proposal was rejected by most delegates who regard the presence of a Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean as a "safeguard to peace."

Six Injured in Jordanian Shelling of Beisan Valley Village

TEL AVIV, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Six persons were slightly injured last night when Jordanian forces shelled Kibbutz Geshor near the confluence of the Yarmuk and Jordan rivers. Jordanians fired six mortar shells into Kibbutz Ahdot Jaacov in the Beisan Valley later last night but no casualties were reported, a military spokesman said and damage was slight. Three of the shells struck between the communal dining hall and the children's quarter.

21 Israeli Soldiers Killed, 76 Wounded in Clashes Since June War

JERUSALEM, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Defense Minister Dayan reported to the Knesset today that 21 Israeli soldiers have been killed and 76 wounded since the end of the Six-Day War last June. Gen. Dayan said that in the same period, 45 saboteurs and infiltrators have been killed and 35 wounded. He said that 1,250 saboteurs were captured or arrested and nine of them have been released from prison so far.

Knesset Hears Demands to End Exemption of Yeshiva Students From Army Service

JERUSALEM, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Demands to end the exemption of yeshiva students from the military draft snowballed in the Knesset (Parliament) today and were the subject of serious debate among the coalition parties, including the religious bloc. The subject was raised yesterday by the independent Liberal faction which protested that it was unfair to relieve thousands of yeshiva students from military service while tens of thousands of other Israeli youth are serving, some of them as long as three years.

The secretariat of the religious kibbutzim affiliated with the National Religious Party meanwhile supported the proposal to end the draft exemption. They pointed out that it applies almost entirely to yeshivas affiliated with the ultra-orthodox Agudat Israel while other religious students have had to interrupt their schooling to serve in the Army, many in the front lines.

Israel to Issue Special Identity Cards for Residents of Occupied Areas

TEL-AVIV, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Special identity cards will soon be issued to West Bank residents and other Israeli-administered territories, Deputy Minister of Interior Dr. I. Ben-Meir told Jenin notables today while touring the West Bank.

The new cards will be distinct from those of East Jerusalemites, whose identity cards are the same as all other Israelis, Mr. Ben-Meir noted.

A population census was carried out last year in Israeli-held areas. Families who took part in the census were given registration slips.

A bus service has been started between the West Bank and Amman, without benefit of franchise but also without interference from Israeli or Jordanian authorities. Some 7,000 West Bankers made the round trip last week for which the fare is one Jordanian dinar, the equivalent of \$2.80. The Military Government of the West Bank is issuing one-trip permits to the busses on a day-to-day basis.

A new high school opened in East Jerusalem yesterday and two more, one for boys and one for girls, will open next week with a total enrollment of more than 1,000 students, it was announced here today. The military government is financing the operation of schools on the West Bank which have an enrollment of 110,000 pupils compared to 130,000 last year. Tuition is free.

Government Commission to Probe Breakdown of Services in Jerusalem in Storm

JERUSALEM, Jan. 24 (JTA)--A Government-appointed committee will investigate the power failure and breakdown of other public services that paralyzed Jerusalem during last week's severe snow storm. Minister of Development Moshe Kol announced in reply to a question in the Knesset (parliament) last night. In addition, the Knesset's interior committee will take up the general stoppage of municipal services during the snow storm when it meets again.

More than 12 inches of snow fell on Jerusalem early last week and while most of it has since melted, some buildings in the city are still without electric power and fallen trees still block some roads.

London Paper Asserts Egyptians Manhandled Prisoners Returned From Israel

LONDON, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Egyptian prisoners of war, repatriated from Israel under Red Cross auspices yesterday, were manhandled by their fellow Egyptian soldiers after crossing from the East to the West bank of the Suez Canal, the London Sun reported today in a dispatch from Kantara. According to the paper, the Egyptians rigged an eight-foot high tarpaulin to conceal the rough handling of their own men from Israelis and press photographers. The two Israeli prisoners who were returned yesterday, an airforce captain and a naval lieutenant, were greeted by prolonged cheering and applause, the Sun said.

Israeli Group Calls for Institution of Civil Marriage in Country

JERUSALEM, Jan. 24 (JTA)--The League for the Abolition of Religious Coercion declared at its second national conference here that the institution of civil marriage in Israel was essential for the encouragement of immigration from the Western countries. The League is a non-political body headed by academicians. Civil marriage and divorce are not permitted in Israel where such matters are regulated by the Chief Rabbinate in accordance with religious law.

Argentine Jewish Leader Reports Abatement of Arab-Jewish Tension There

NEW YORK, Jan. 24 (JTA)--The Arab community in Argentina has been unresponsive to attempts by Arab League propaganda agents to incite hostility toward Argentine Jews, according to Dr. Isaac Goldenberg, president of the Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), the central representative body of Argentine Jewry.

Dr. Goldenberg, who stopped over here on his way home from Europe and Israel, told officers of the World Jewish Congress that "the tension between the Jewish and Arab communities of Argentina last summer during and immediately after the Arab-Israeli war, has now subsided and there are many indications of rapprochement between the two communities." He said Arab League agents in Argentina have enlisted the support of extreme right wing anti-Semitic groups and of the Argentine Communist Party which is strongly Stalinist. "But the overwhelming majority of the Arab community has proved unresponsive to this incitement." At private and public meeting of Jews and Arabs, Dr. Goldenberg said, "there has been acknowledgement of a common interest in aiding the achievement of a just and durable peace in the Middle East."

Nazi Convicted of Auschwitz Murders, Released After Three Years of Prison

BONN, Jan. 24 (JTA)--A notorious Nazi war criminal, convicted of participating in the murder of 8,000 Jews at the Auschwitz death camp, was released from prison today after serving less than three years of a nine year sentence imposed on him by a Frankfurt court on Aug. 20, 1965.

The freed man is Victor Capesius who was an SS officer and pharmacist at Auschwitz and was regarded as one of the worst offenders tried at the first Auschwitz war crimes trial. His crimes included theft of Jewish property for his personal use. The court that ordered his release explained its action by the fact that Capesius's appeal is still pending before the High Court and said that it didn't think the convicted man would try to escape. Capesius is a wealthy man, owner of several pharmacies in West Germany. His release is regarded here as the most serious of the increasing number of releases granted convicted Nazi war criminals.

Ukraine Wants Human Rights Body to Study 'Violent Upsurge' of Neo-Nazism

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Jan. 24 (JTA)--The chairman of the U.N. Human Rights Commission said here yesterday that he wants that body to take up the problem of resurgent Nazism in certain countries and to recommend action to the General Assembly.

P.E. Nedbaile, of the Ukraine, mentioned no specific country when he declared that "measures should be taken to halt Nazi activities wherever they occur". But he was clearly referring to West Germany when he asserted that in "one country, under official protection, local and general meetings of such groups have sharply increased." He added that "this intensification has taken place with the encouragement and under the protection of the official authorities of that country."

West German leaders have voiced increasing concern over the growing political power of the National Democratic Party, an extreme right-wing nationalist group espousing Hitlerian tenets, which has gained seats in six of the ten Laender (state) parliaments and stands a good chance of winning seats in the Bundestag (lower house) in the next elections. But the Bonn Government is loathe to initiate legal steps to ban the NPD for fear that these may backfire.

Mr. Nedbaile warned that "the violent upsurge of neo-Nazism, recalling the period of the rise of Hitlerism, is a real danger to the cause of peace throughout the world, and this process is even now accompanied by a broad attack on the basic constitutional rights and human freedoms. In these circumstances, new effective measures must be taken to ensure the implementation of provisions of international law calling for the eradication of Nazism and militarism and categorically forbidding all Nazi or militarist activity or propaganda."

West German Ministers to Study Action on Statute of Limitations in War Crimes

BONN, Jan. 24 (JTA)--The question of postponing or abolishing the statute of limitations which will protect Nazi war criminals from prosecution after it goes into effect on Dec. 31, 1969, will be subject of discussion shortly between West German Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger and Minister of Justice Gustave Heinemann, a Government spokesman disclosed at a press conference here today. It is expected that the Cabinet will take up the matter afterwards.

The disclosure was made in reply to a question as to whether Chancellor Kiesinger planned to take any action following his meeting with Dr. William Wexler, president of B'nai B'rith in Bonn last week. Dr. Wexler had expressed concern that many untried war criminals would go free when the statute of limitations entered into effect.

Bonn Hesitates to Act on Charges President Leubke Aided Nazis

BONN, Jan. 24 (JTA)--The West German Government is apparently reluctant to recommend that a libel suit be filed against the illustrated weekly Stern, and the American writer, John Howard Haring, who alleged in an article that President Heinrich Leubke of the Federal Republic was a builder of concentration camps under the Nazi regime. The subject came up at today's press conference when Secretary of State Gunter Diehl was asked if the Government intended to advise President Leubke to take legal action. Mr. Diehl said that no decision had been made and that he thought it was pointless "to argue with those who make these charges against the President." Up to now, the Government has maintained that libel suits were useless because the slanderers lived in East Germany and could not be brought to trial. Stern, however, is a West German magazine.

Montreal Jewish Day Schools Sign Agreement on Government Financial Aid

MONTREAL, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Jewish education officials reported today that agreement had been reached in principal on contracts with Jewish day schools here under which the schools will receive Quebec governmental financial aid covering most of the per pupil costs of education under a new provincial law.

Representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal reached the general agreement in current negotiations for affiliation of the schools with the school board. Bill 37, which has been in effect since last July 1, permits private educational institutions to be affiliated with the "public" school systems in Quebec, via coordination of activities and finances. Under the confessional system of elementary and secondary education in the province, "public" schools are under either Protestant or Catholic auspices.

Once an "umbrella" agreement has been completed, details would remain to be worked out individually between each day school and the board. The individual agreements would then have to be sent to the provincial Education Minister for approval. It was noted that the Minister has not yet given approval to an agreement reached last fall between the Talmud Torah in Chomedey and the Greater St. Martin School Board.

The officials expressed the hope that the Montreal agreements would be retroactive to last January 1. Bill 37 provides funds only for the secular portions of the day school's operations. Parents would still bear the responsibility for the Jewish portion of the curriculum. However, only about five percent of the curriculum is in the non-secular category of day schools which provide Hebrew or religious instruction, the officials said.

Rabbis Divided On Recognition of Children of Mixed Marriages

NEW YORK, Jan. 24 (JTA)--The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation has completed a survey of 137 Reform and Conservative rabbis which indicates that no consistent policy is followed--and considerable confusion exists--in determining the religious status of children of Jewish mixed marriages in which the mother is non-Jewish.

The survey, which is the subject of an article in the current issue of the "Reconstructionist", a bi-weekly published by the Foundation, was prompted by recent disclosures that from 12 to 20 percent of Jews in different parts of the United States engaged in mixed marriages and that in about 70 percent of such cases, the male marriage partner is the Jew. According to traditional Jewish law, the children of these marriages are not considered Jewish. They are usually informed of that fact at the time of their Bar Mitzvah or confirmation and "such revelations can have tragic and emotionally disturbing consequences," the Reconstructionist said.

According to its survey, prepared by Benjamin William Melman, a New York attorney, a majority of the Conservative rabbis responding insisted that these children undergo conversion ceremonies, including circumcision or symbolic blood-letting and ritual immersion. But a third of the Conservative rabbis made no such demand and insisted only that the children be given a Jewish education and that the parents be affiliated with a synagogue. The overwhelming percentage of Reform rabbis agreed with the latter procedure and required that the children be educated in a religious school and undergo a Bar Mitzvah or confirmation ceremony.

The survey disclosed that a "significant number" of children of mixed marriages attended Jewish religious schools and that a majority of the mothers of these children had converted to Judaism before marriage.

Harman Hails U.S. 'Decency and Fair Play' Towards Israel

NEW YORK, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Addressing 500 guests at a farewell dinner last night tendered by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Ambassador Avraham Harman of Israel paid tribute to "the sense of decency and fair play" which he said the United States had shown towards Israel and other small nations that had obtained their independence following World War II.

The ambassador praised the United States for its "unswerving policy" of upholding the right of every state to be its own self and to see its existence respected. He said that "never has this policy of supporting small and independent state been more effectively and clearly expressed than in the American stand during the Middle East crisis last June and in the UN debate since that time."

Funeral Services Held For Maurice Levin; Merchant, Philanthropist, Dead at 78

NEW YORK, Jan. 24 (JTA)--Funeral services were held here today for Maurice Levin, merchant and philanthropist who died in Miami Beach Sunday at the age of 78. Mr. Levin had been president of the Hearn Department Store, Inc., which he developed from a \$4 million enterprise employing 400 persons in 1932 to a \$42 million business with 4500 employees when he retired in 1949. Rabbi Arthur Schneier of Park East Synagogue officiated.

Mr. Levin was born in Lowell, Mass., to an immigrant family from Bialystok, Russia, where his father had been a Jewish scholar and philosopher. His formal schooling ended in the elementary grades. When he retired from business, Mr. Levin devoted his life to philanthropy and was also closely identified with the Jewish National Fund, land reclamation arm of the World Zionist Organization. Mr. Levin also helped finance "The Eternal Road" a pageant of Jewish history co-produced by Max Rheinhardt and Meyer Weisgal.