

JTA daily news bulletin

Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc. 660 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

Contents copyright: Republication only by previous arrangement.

Vol. XXXV - Fifty-First Year

Friday, May 31, 1968

No. 195

Escalation of Jordanian Military Action In Jordan, Beisan Valleys Puzzles Israel

TEL AVIV, May 30 (JTA)--The Jordan and Beisan Valleys echoed with gun-fire this morning for the third successive day as Israeli authorities pondered the reasons for the sudden escalation of attacks by Jordanians encamped on the East Bank of the river. A military spokesman reported that one soldier was injured in a mine incident on the Golan Heights near the Jordanian border yesterday. On Tuesday night, an El Fatah gang crossed the Yarmuk River into Israel and planted anti-personnel mines in the vineyards near Tel Katzir. One settler was seriously injured and another suffered slight injuries when they detonated the mines yesterday morning.

Israeli authorities believe that the Amman Government has lost control of its Army commanders along the Israel-Jordan demarcation line. The local commanders apparently have an agreement with the El Fatah to coordinate their attacks on Israel with El Fatah movements, it was said here.

The Jordanians opened fire in the Manshieh area in the northern Jordan Valley shortly before eight o'clock local time this morning, aiming at workers in the fields of Kibbutz Maoz Chaim. Israeli return fire silenced the Jordanian guns. No casualties were reported.

Jordanians opened fire yesterday at Shaar Hagolah, also in the Jordan Valley. That shooting followed an all-night artillery duel in which Israeli settlements in the Beisan and Jordan Valleys were hit. The Jordanians used 105-millimeter field pieces from positions opposite Gesher. These were blasted by Israeli return fire which also scored direct hits on the Jordanian Army post at Adasiyeh police station.

The Jordanians started shooting at eight o'clock Tuesday evening in coordination with El Fatah units. One settler was wounded at Massada and extensive damage was reported at Gesher, Shaar Hagolah and Ashdod Yaacov. A children's home was hit, cowsheds and other buildings were damaged and electric lines were destroyed. A military spokesman reported that Israeli return fire inflicted heavy damage on Jordanian positions.

The puzzlement over the renewed Jordanian attacks stemmed from recent signs that the Jordan Valley region was going to have a period of quiet. A week ago, Jordanian villagers returned to their homes in Shuneh which had been evacuated by the El Fatah and resumed the cultivation of their fields. The village even showed lights at night for the first time in months.

(The London Daily Telegraph said in a dispatch from Amman, the Jordanian capital, that Arabs arriving there from the Israeli-held West Bank reported an Israeli military build-up. The travellers were quoted as saying that the Israelis were massing troops, tanks and artillery for attacks on Jordanian villages.)

Jordanian Police Take On Self-Styled Fedayeen For First Time

LONDON, May 30 (JTA)--Jordanian police armed with machine-guns fought a pitched battle with a band of 15 similarly armed Arab irregulars in the streets of Amman, the London Times reported from the Jordanian capital today. The irregulars, wearing uniforms, tried to storm a police station to rescue a comrade who had been arrested for questioning. A civilian bystander was killed and a civilian and four policemen were wounded, according to the Times report. Two of the attackers were reportedly arrested.

The Times said the battle was the first sign since last June's Arab-Israeli war that Jordanian authorities appeared willing and able to act against self-styled Fedayeen. The gunmen were described as bogus Fedayeen, belonging to none of the three main guerrilla organizations operating from Jordanian soil. Fake commandoes have proliferated in Jordan to take advantage of popular admiration of El Fatah and other terrorist groups that raid Israel. In recent months there have been many reports of civilians, including foreigners, being accosted by self-styled commandoes demanding "donations."

United Hias President Hails State Dept. Readiness To Assist Polish Jews' Immigration

NEW YORK, May 30 (JTA)--The president of United Hias Service, the worldwide Jewish migration society, today hailed the intention of the State Department to provide visas to Polish Jews wishing to emigrate to the United States. A State Department source was quoted in yesterday's New York Post as saying that the Department was prepared to accommodate "any foreseeable demand" by Jews who seek to emigrate. He gave assurances that enough visa and refugee openings were available to handle as many as could come.

Carlos L. Israels, Hias president said, the agency is "extremely pleased" with the Department's humanitarian concern. "As in the past our agency is ready to assist any Jew in Poland who succeeds in leaving that country to come to the United States should he wish to do so. Our agency," he said, "is in constant touch with the Department and other Government agencies with respect to working out viable plans and procedures for the admission of oppressed and persecuted Polish Jews. We urge relatives of Polish Jews who wish to effect family reunion with them in this country to contact United Hias or local cooperating family service agencies for counseling and technical assistance," Mr. Israels said.

The Post article said that under the current immigration law, the U.S. could accommodate large numbers of Polish Jews by using national quotas. A law which takes effect July 1 abolishes these quotas

but allows 10,000 visas for refugees to be applied as needed. The State Department source told The Post that should there be a mass exodus to the U.S., the Department would be willing to seek extraordinary authority under immigration laws to admit the refugees if it was needed.

The Department is apparently not expecting an immediate influx of Polish Jews. The official noted that their big problem is getting out of the country, since, under normal procedures, applications for exit visas take from two to four months to process. Last week columnist Drew Pearson reported that President Johnson was personally eager to provide a haven in the U.S. for Polish Jews who want to escape the anti-Semitic campaign in their country.

Series Of Mining Incidents Lead To Curfew On 'Boundary' Separating Gaza, Israel

TEL AVIV, May 30 (JTA)--A night curfew was imposed on the so-called "green line" separating the Gaza Strip from Israel today in the aftermath of a series of mining incidents. A mine killed two members of nearby Kibbutz Nahal Oz several days ago. A military spokesman disclosed that 29 Gaza Strip residents had been arrested in the past few days on suspicion of membership in the sabotage gang believed responsible for planting the mines. A large cache of submachine guns, hand grenades and mines was seized. The curfew was described as a security measure. The suspects come from the towns of Gaza, Rafah and Khan Yunis, all in the Strip.

An Army halftrack and a harvesting combine hit mines in the vicinity of Nahal Oz this afternoon but there were no casualties, a military spokesman reported. The halftrack struck a mine on a road two miles north of the kibbutz. The harvester hit a mine 10 minutes later on a road two miles southwest of Nahal Oz.

The Army disclosed that a patrol intercepted four saboteurs in an area northeast of Gaza during the night of May 27-28. One of them was wounded and captured in the encounter. An Army jeep pursuing the others struck a mine which had been planted in the saboteurs' line of retreat. There were no casualties. Another saboteur was captured in a search after a curfew was imposed on the northeast quarter of Gaza, a military spokesman said.

Nablus High School Girls Strike, Offended By Hand-Holding

JERUSALEM, May 30 (JTA)--Civil unrest in Gaza spread to the West Bank town of Nablus today where high school girls went on strike, apparently in a demonstration of solidarity with the school girls of Gaza. The latter have been blocking roads and stoning Israeli vehicles for the last five days. Four Gaza high school girls were fined \$143 in court yesterday for stoning incidents. A teacher brought up on the same charges was acquitted for lack of evidence. Nablus town elders contended that the girls' strike there had nothing to do with the Gaza incidents but was a protest against public hand-holding by Israeli boys and girls visiting Nablus.

West Bank Arabs Divided On General Strike June 5, First Anniversary of Middle East War

JERUSALEM, May 30 (JTA)--West Bank Arab leaders are split over whether to call a general strike on June 5, the first anniversary of the start of last year's Arab-Israel war. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned today that the question is being hotly debated and opinion is divided equally. Nationalist Arabs from Ramallah and Nablus are demanding a total shut-down of all businesses and transportation. Others argue that a strike would only hurt the Arabs. They fear, for example, that licenses to operate bus lines and other public services might be rescinded by the Israeli authorities.

(The semi-official Cairo newspaper, Al Ahram, reported yesterday that Arab guerrillas plan commando raids for the period June 5-10 to "punish Israel" on the anniversary of the Six-Day War.)

Students and faculty members at the Hebrew University who are opposed to the annexation of the occupied Arab territories by Israel held a mass meeting on the campus yesterday. Apart from some heckling, there was no repetition of the clashes that occurred earlier when groups of students and building employees tried to prevent forcibly the gathering of signatures on a petition asking the Government not to annex or settle the occupied regions.

Eban Proposes Steps Toward Peace — Negotiations, Agreements, Treaty, Implementation

JERUSALEM, May 30 (JTA)--A four-step agenda to resolve the Middle East deadlock was proposed yesterday by Foreign Minister Abba Eban during debate in the Knesset. Replying to a question from Mapam deputy Reuben Arzi, Eban said the steps should be negotiations, agreements, conclusion of a treaty and implementation of it.

He said negotiations meant face-to-face talks with the Arabs, with the declared intention that the aim of the talks was to bring about peace. Agreements, he said, should cover all the matters involved in the Nov. 22, 1967 United Nations Security Council resolution on the Middle East, and they must include agreement on an end to Arab belligerence. Eban said definitions of agreed borders and agreed security arrangements would "obviously" determine the deployment of armed forces under conditions of peace. The nations must explicitly recognize the independence, integrity of every state in the area and its right to exist in peace, he added.

All of these required agreements, Eban said, should then be incorporated in peace treaties which, when signed, would end the state of belligerence and enable a state of peace to prevail. He added that the parties would then agree to work out arrangements to implement the agreements after they were signed as elements of peace treaties.

West German Politicians Debate Statute of Limitations On War Crimes Prosecutions

BONN, May 30 (JTA)--Political circles in West Germany are seriously debating the issue of the statute of limitations which, when it goes into effect at the end of 1969, would bar all future prosecution of Nazi war criminals. The small Free Democratic Party is unanimously opposed to delaying the effective date of the statute but a majority of the Social Democrats and a minority in the Christian Democratic Party want to set the date back. Minister of Justice Gustav Heinemann has argued that the statute should be abolished and the Social Democrats will probably seek a debate on this issue in the Bundestag (lower house) later this year.

Those advocating an extension of the period before the statute goes into effect, or its outright abolition, point out that many Nazi war criminals are still unpunished and even unknown. Each new war crimes trial turns up new evidence implicating war criminals who have hitherto escaped detection, they say.

Israel Rejects Explanations By West German Firms On Reported Boycott Compliance

JERUSALEM, May 30 (JTA)--The Israel Government has rejected as unsatisfactory statements issued by two West German firms explaining their position on the Arab boycott of Israel and will continue efforts to obtain clarification from the West German Foreign Ministry and the firms themselves, it was disclosed here. The firms — two of West Germany's greatest industrial enterprises, Thyssen and Mannesmann — had contracted to supply Israel with the steel pipe required for construction of the Eilat-Ashdod oil pipeline. An Arab Boycott Office announcement said that the two firms had agreed to comply with the boycott.

Director-General Gideon Rafael of the Israel Foreign Ministry raised the issue this week in a meeting with Dr. Rolf Pauls, the West German Ambassador. Israel is seeking a clear-cut statement from the two firms that they will not yield to the Arab boycott and will discharge their contractual obligations to Israel by providing the balance of the pipe for which they received orders. The two firms competed for, and won, contracts to supply Israel with 90,000 tons of 42-inch steel pipe at a cost of about \$12 million. Thyssen has completed delivery on about 50 percent of the steel pipe for which it contracted. The pipeline, when completed, will permit tankers to discharge their cargo at Eilat into the pipeline carrying oil to Ashdod where other tankers can reload, thus bypassing the Suez Canal or the long journey around Africa.

Capital Import, Bond Sales, Foreign Currency Reserves Up, Israel Reports

JERUSALEM, May 30 (JTA)--The importation of capital into Israel rose to \$778 million in 1967 as against \$475 million in 1966, the Treasury reported. It said sale of Israel Government Bonds abroad jumped from \$122 million in 1966 to \$230 million in 1967. Israel's obligations abroad in the form of Independence and Development Bonds stood at \$718 million at the end of last year, the Treasury said. Foreign currency reserves rose from \$731 million to \$947 million.

Minister of Labor Yigal Allon announced that unemployment in Israel had dropped by almost two-thirds in the past year. From a high of 42,000 in March, 1967, he said, the figure had fallen to just under 17,000 in March of this year. Included in that figure, he noted, were some 5,000 "hard-core" cases, mainly unskilled workers. There were labor scarcities, he said, in electronics, nursing and clerical jobs.

David Golan, director-general of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, told the press that while there had been no rise in exports during the first four months of this year, a careful study of market conditions supported a 1968 target of \$470 million in exports, compared to \$430 million in 1967. He said that the Government had scaled down its estimated annual growth of industrial exports but considered a \$40 million increase this year to be possible. The forecast of an annual export growth rate of 17 percent, which the Government had submitted to the world economic conference here last month, was too optimistic, he said, and a growth rate of about nine percent for the next five years was more likely.

Aaron Vergelis, 'Sovietish Heimland' Editor, Plans Visit To Australia Soon

MELBOURNE, May 30 (JTA)--The Russian-Jewish writer Aaron Vergelis, editor of the Moscow Yiddish magazine, "Sovietish Heimland," will visit Australia shortly, according to Tony Rubinstein, managing director of the Australian Jewish News. Mr. Rubinstein said that Mr. Vergelis told him he wanted to visit Australia when they met in Moscow recently. The Soviet Government announced last week that Mr. Vergelis had been awarded the "Badge of Merit" for his contributions to Soviet literature.

European Community Services Conference Adopts New Name At Meeting In Britain

LONDON, May 30 (JTA)--The Standing Conference of the European Jewish Community Services has changed its name to European Council of Jewish Community Services. The new name was adopted at a meeting here at which the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation was host. The meeting was attended by representatives of 10 European Jewish communities. Guests included Louis D. Horwitz, director-general of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and S. J. Kreutner, acting general manager of Keren Hayesod, fund-raising arm of the World Zionist Organization.

Arab Ex-Mayor Of Old City Will Address Rally For 'Jordan Refugee Week' In London

LONDON, May 30 (JTA)--British members of Parliament will join a group of their Jordanian counterparts to inaugurate "Jordan Refugee Week" at what is billed as a "giant rally" to be held in Trafalgar Square on Sunday, June 9, it was announced here today. The main speaker will be Rouhi El-Khatib, who had been mayor of the Old City of Jerusalem under Jordanian rule.

Study of Protestant Education Material Focuses On Christian-Jewish Relations

NEW YORK, May 30 (JTA)--The American Jewish Committee and National Conference of Christians and Jews announced today the beginning of a year-long study to determine how Protestant educational material has taken into account recent important developments in Christian-Jewish relations. The research project seeks to ascertain how Protestants have revised textbooks, lesson materials and have changed curricula in light of an earlier study of Protestant textbooks of the 1950s. That study probed Protestant attitudes toward minorities. A volume entitled "Faith and Prejudice," it pointed out distortions, inadequacies and biased selection of Biblical source material, according to its author Dr. Bernhard E. Olson. He is the NCCJ's inter-religious affairs director. The work was published in cooperation with the AJCommittee.

Dr. Olson said the new study of current educational materials will also focus on their contents in light of the Catholic Vatican Council's Declaration on the Jews and statements by major Protestant denominational and inter-denominational bodies on anti-Semitism and relations with Jews. Joining him in the announcement was Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, director of the AJCommittee's inter-religious affairs department.

Other events figuring into the study are the increase of Jewish-Christian dialogue and the Arab-Israel crisis. The Leonard M. Sperry Research Center Fund of Los Angeles is underwriting the study together with matching funds from the two agencies.

Reporters Accuse Johnson Administration Of Misleading Public On Liberty Incident

WASHINGTON, May 30 (JTA)--The Johnson Administration was accused today of misleading the American public on the facts of the accidental Israeli attack on the USS Liberty during the Six-Day War. The charges were contained in a book, "Anything But The Truth," offered as an expose of "The Credibility Gap," by White House correspondents William McGaffin and Erwin Knoll.

According to the writers, "When Congressmen, responding to letters from relatives of the dead sailors, demanded to know why the ship had been so close to the Israeli shore, the Pentagon offered an explanation...nothing short of ludicrous. It said the position was required so that the Liberty could use the moon as a passive reflector for its communications...One Defense Department official, who winced at his Department's claim, quipped that the Liberty -- to keep up with the changing position of the moon -- would have had to sail right across the sands of Sinai."

McGaffin and Knoll said "the truth, which leaked out soon enough, was that the ship was a spy vessel, equipped with elaborate electronic surveillance gear and assigned by the National Security Agency, which specializes in breaking the military codes of other nations. Presumably, the Liberty was monitoring Israeli and Arab battlefield communications."

Israel paid the U.S. \$3,323,500 in compensation this week to the families of 34 Americans killed on the Liberty last June 8. The Liberty was hit by jets and torpedo boats while in international waters 15.5 nautical miles off the Sinai coast. Israel explained later that the attack resulted from the mistaken belief that the ship was Egyptian.

The book asserted that when the crisis grew worse last spring, "President Johnson issued a flat directive to all members of his Administration to discuss no aspect of the situation with the press...Americans were left in the dark on the President's thinking and the Government's plans." When reporters disclosed that the United States had no real intention of keeping commitments to Israel on the Tiran Straits blockade, "The President grew angry...but no effort was made to set the record straight or to furnish a basis for accurate reports," the book asserted.

Commerce Dept. Discloses U.S. Citizens May Purchase Local Currency in Israel

WASHINGTON, May 30 (JTA)--The Bureau of International Commerce of the Department of Commerce disclosed today that Israel is one of seven countries in which United States citizens may purchase local currency from the United States Embassy or Consulates at the official rate of exchange. There are no bank fees involved and the purchaser may pay in American currency, personal checks drawn on an American bank or with U.S. travellers checks.

The local funds are surplus counterpart funds acquired by the U.S. from surplus commodities sales under the Food for Peace program. All agreements made under the program now include provisions for local currency sales to tourists and businessmen where the supply of local currency exceeds the amount necessary to pay for U.S. Government activities in those countries.

The Bureau's announcement did not disclose the extent of the currency sales except to note that the amount in 1967 exceeded the combined purchases of the previous four years. The Bureau said the currency sales "help reduce the dollar outflow."

Black 'Republic' Says German Restitution To Jews Justifies Similar Claim For Negroes

WASHINGTON, May 30 (JTA)--A Black nationalist coalition calling itself "The Republic of New Africa" has cited West German reparations to Jews as a precedent justifying a claim for \$200 billion in restitution payments to United States Negroes. Brother Imari, who says his "slave name" is Richard B. Henry, is "Minister of Information" of the "Republic." He told a press conference here that the "Republic's demand for \$10,000 in reparations to each Negro was well-established in international law" by the Jewish precedent. He said that Negroes were exploited as slave laborers and transported about in captivity in tactics similar to Nazi exploitation and deportation of Jews."