

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

Wednesday, July 24, 1968

No. 141

Commandos Seize El Al Plane, Divert It To Algiers; Israelis, Jews Said Detained

TEL AVIV, July 23 (JTA)--An El Al Israel National Air Lines passenger liner flying from Rome to Lydda International Airport was hijacked by Arab terrorists shortly after midnight today and forced to proceed to Algiers.

The plane, carrying 38 passengers and a crew of 10, put down safely at the North African airport two-and-a-half hours later. The Algerian authorities first announced that all 38 passengers would be flown immediately to France. Later, however, only 20 were permitted to depart for Paris in an Algerian plane. The remaining 18 — Israelis and Jews of American and other nationalities — were not allowed to depart and were reported tonight to have been placed in detention. There was no word as to the Algerian intentions with regard to the Israeli crew or the \$5-6 million, seven-year-old Boeing 707 airliner.

Algerian sources were quoted as asserting that since a state of belligerency continued between Israel and Algeria following the 1967 June war, Algeria might consider the Israelis enemy nationals and the plane, enemy property. An Algerian broadcast asserted that courtesy was shown the passengers but indicated that some might be detained along with the crew.

Algerian sources reported that the hijacking had been carried out by a Syrian Air Force officer traveling incognito, in command of a five-man commando squad. But the so-called Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine issued a statement in Beirut, claiming credit for the exploit. It called on the Algerian Government to hold the passengers and crew as hostages for Arab terrorists imprisoned in Israel.

The coup was carried out about 20 minutes after the giant Israel liner had taken off from Fiumicino Airport on a regularly scheduled return flight to Israel, and while it was still in Italian airspace. According to information here, the passengers included seven Catholic priests on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Rome chief of police, Signor Liberti, for whom a delegation was waiting at Lydda. One of the passengers was identified as Mrs. Hanna Uziel, 27, of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Traffic control at Lydda Airport received a message from the plane shortly after the hijacking revealing that its veteran pilot, Capt. Oded Abarbanel, had been forced to change course. The Israeli authorities and El Al officials swung into action immediately, seeking international assistance in securing the release of the plane, crew and passengers. Appeals for intervention were directed to the United Nations, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Italian Government and Air France which maintains regular services into Algiers.

(Israeli sources at the United Nations said that Ambassador Yosef Tekoah had aroused Secretary-General U Thant at 4 a.m. to advise him of the development and to seek his intercession. Mr. Thant immediately communicated with Ambassador Tewfik Bouattoura of Algeria and informed him of his concern. The Algerian envoy is the current president of the Security Council. He reportedly told Mr. Thant he had no instructions from his Government.

(Diplomats at the United Nations headquarters were quoted today as being concerned that the Arab hijacking might trigger a whole series of similar incidents which could only increase tension in the Middle East and might result in retaliatory or deterrent actions.

(Ambassador Bouattoura had a meeting this afternoon with Mr. Thant on the affair. Ambassador Tekoah was in constant touch with UN Undersecretary Ralph Bunche, Mr. Thant's second in command.)

Algeria Not Party To 1967 Middle East Cease-Fire

A spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry said tonight that it was assumed that Algeria would release the plane and crew in accordance with international law and practice. It was pointed out here, however, that Algeria did not sign a cease-fire agreement with Israel after the 1967 war. Algerian Army units are reputed to be serving with the Egyptian forces along the west bank of the Suez Canal.

In somewhat similar circumstances, the Castro regime in Cuba has made it a practice to release United States civilian planes and crews hijacked over the U.S. and forced to proceed to Havana. It was pointed out here, however, that Algeria never released former Premier Moise Tshombe of the Congo, who was a passenger on a hijacked plane forced to land there, and was brought to release hijacked Swiss and British planes only with the greatest of difficulty.

El Al officials said in Israel that the loss of the plane would not interfere with the line's operations. They said arrangements had been made to charter another Boeing 707 airliner to maintain all scheduled flights.

(An El Al spokesman in New York said the line was taking "maximum precautions" on the ground to prevent further hijacking attempts. He did not disclose the nature of these precautions.)

The "Popular Front" which claimed credit for the air piracy is a roof organization of four terrorist groups formed last year. It operated under Syrian auspices until some months ago when it ran into trouble with the Syrian authorities who jailed some of the Front leaders. Since then, the organization

is believed to operate under orders from Cairo. The Front is said to have between 400 and 500 members. It was allotted only four delegates to the recent council of terrorist organizations in Cairo out of 100 accredited.

(In Lausanne, Switzerland, a self-proclaimed spokesman for the Front said the hijacking marked the beginning of a new campaign which would include similar hijacking attempts and the kidnapping of prominent Israelis.)

The skipper of the hijacked plane, Capt. Abarbanel, 41, a decorated veteran of the Israeli Air Force, was said in one unconfirmed report to have been struck on the head with a revolver butt to compel him to alter the plane's course. His associates here recalled that Capt. Abarbanel was the pilot of the El Al plane that inadvertently violated Hungarian air space two years ago on a flight from Vienna. He evaded Hungarian MIG fighters that sought to force him to land and brought the plane safely home.

A passenger who arrived in Paris reported that the El Al airliner was piloted by a hijacker, apparently the man later identified as a Syrian Air Force officer. The Israeli pilot was badly beaten on the head and thrown in the rear of the plane, bleeding profusely, according to another passenger.

Halpern Urges Halt In U.S. Economic Aid, World Loans To Algeria

WASHINGTON, July 23 (JTA)--The hijacking of an Israeli airliner and the detention of the plane crew and some of its passengers by Algeria brought a demand in Congress today that American economic aid to Algeria be halted and that world lending agencies withhold further loans to the Algerian regime.

Rep. Seymour Halpern, New York Republican, told the House today that "a country that collaborates with air piracy and terrorism should not remain qualified for the direct and indirect financial assistance of international lending agencies." He termed the Algerian action in detaining some of the passengers, the crew and the El Al plane as an action "worse even than the air hijacking policies of Communist Cuba." He asserted that "Algeria cannot be permitted to get away in this shocking new case because it will invite a rash of Arab terrorism of the airways."

The New Yorker said he was initiating a study of "direct and indirect financial assistance flowing to Algeria from the United States and international banking institutions." He said that until the plane, its crew and passengers were released, the United States should advise its citizens not to travel to Algeria because of that Government's "irresponsible policies and collaboration with gangsterism."

Rep. Dante Fascell, Florida Democrat, asked Secretary of State Dean Rusk today to seek an international agreement to discourage hijacking of airplanes. He said in a letter to Mr. Rusk that the proposed pact should bind all signatories to return promptly all hijacked aircraft, passengers and crew and the hijacker to the nation from which the plane departed.

United States Agrees To Provide Jordanian Government With \$6 Million

WASHINGTON, July 23 (JTA)--The United States today agreed to give Jordan \$6 million for goods or development projects. The Jordanian Government had complained that America was obliged to provide this aid.

Jordan is understood to have protested that the \$6 million was a sum that remained unpaid after the U.S. cancelled a \$30 million annual support program at the end of 1967. The U.S. terminated the special support because it was learned that the oil-rich Arab states were subsidizing the Jordanian economy to an extent deemed adequate.

The new grant will help Jordan pay for F-104 supersonic jet fighters, tanks and other arms being purchased from the U.S. It would provide diversion of other resources to meet the arms bill.

(In another Middle East development, President Nasser of Egypt said today there would be no peace in the Middle East until Israel withdraws from all Arab territory occupied in the Six-Day War. In a speech to the ruling Arab Socialist Union Party, Nasser said Egypt would not budge from its original position — no negotiations, no peace, and no recognition of Israel.)

Damiyah Bridge, Over Jordan, Reopened To Traffic; Was Closed After Karameh Battle

JERUSALEM, July 23 (JTA)--The Damiyah Bridge across the Jordan River, closed since the Israeli expedition into Jordan territory to destroy guerrilla bases at Karameh three months ago, was reopened to traffic today. The bridge had received extensive damage from shellfire during the Karameh battle. The bridge will be used mainly for transportation of agricultural produce and commercial traffic across the Jordan between the Israeli-held West Bank and Jordanian territory. Most travellers will continue to use the Allenby Bridge a few miles to the south.

Israeli Settler In Beisan Valley Injured Seriously When He Triggers Boobytrap

TEL AVIV, July 23 (JTA)--An Israeli settler, whose name was not disclosed, was injured seriously today when he triggered a boobytrap near his settlement, Massadah, in the Beisan Valley. An hour later three soldiers were injured when their command car hit an anti-vehicle mine in the same area.

Explosives were detonated last night at an earth dam south of the Dead Sea. Damage was reported slight and there were no casualties.

Expected Thant To Hold That Emissary Cannot Probe Status Of Jews In Arab Lands

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., July 23 (JTA)--Secretary-General U Thant was expected this week to agree publicly with the Arab position that the condition of Jews in Arab states cannot be investigated by an emissary who would look into the status of civilians in the Middle East war zone. It was known that the legal division of the UN Secretariat has provided Mr. Thant with an opinion that "humanitarian" resolutions adopted by the Security Council and General Assembly last year were not intended to cover Jewish communities in Arab states. This opinion was expected to be accepted by Mr. Thant in a progress report scheduled for release later this week on his secret negotiations to send a special "humanitarian" envoy to the area.

Arab envoys have sought since early this year to have Mr. Thant open a second investigation of conditions of Arab civilians in Israeli-occupied territories. Israel has been concerned over what is regarded as mistreatment of Jews in Egypt, Syria and Iraq and has taken the position that a UN emissary must look into this situation as well.

An Israeli source said that its UN mission was in possession of Mr. Thant's report and would make a formal reply soon. The mission has asked the Israel Foreign Ministry for instructions. It was believed that one question was whether Israel would accept a UN emissary who was not authorized to look into the condition of Jewish communities in Arab countries.

"Israel's position is known to be that the Secretariat is submitting to Arab pressures and using legalistic arguments as an excuse to justify, after the fact, a one-sided political decision," The New York Post reported today.

Another UN envoy, Nils Goren-Gussing, was sent to look into the Middle East civilian situation last year. At that time, Mr. Thant said publicly that the resolutions authorizing the mission "might properly be interpreted as having application to the treatment...of both Arab and Jewish persons in the states directly concerned because of their participation in the war."

Mr. Gussing toured Jewish shops in Damascus with a Syrian Government escort last summer, but Iraq and Egypt would not let him look into the status of Jews in those countries. All three countries are now known to oppose such an inquiry. The two UN resolutions concerned recommend "to governments concerned the scrupulous respect of the humanitarian principle governing...the protection of civilian persons in time of war, contained in the Geneva Convention." Mr. Thant was instructed to "follow the effective implementation" of the resolutions.

(UN Middle East peace envoy Gunnar V. Jarring returned here Monday night. It was believed that he resumed his mediation efforts in the Middle East deadlock today, a UN source said.)

Atherton Returns To Israel, Expected To Meet With Officials

JERUSALEM, July 23 (JTA)--Alfred Atherton, head of the Israel-Arab desk in the United States State Department, who accompanied United Nations Ambassador George Ball and Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco on their tour of Arab capitals, returned to Jerusalem today for further meetings and conferences. The American diplomats had visited Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi-Arabia after their call here and Ambassador Ball and Mr. Sisco then went on to the Far East.

Mr. Atherton was to confer with U.S. Embassy and consular officials here and was also expected to meet Israel Foreign Ministry experts who were expected to give him their views on developments in Iraq. Israeli sources said that Mr. Atherton brought no new proposals and would not conduct any negotiations here. It was believed possible, however, that he would relay to Israeli officials and American representatives here attitudes expressed in the Arab countries he had just visited.

Eshkol Denies JFK Promised Fleet Support If Israel Did Not Produce Nuclear Weapons

JERUSALEM, July 23 (JTA)--Prime Minister Levi Eshkol set the record straight yesterday on one important aspect of United States-Israel relations about which a new historical legend had grown. Responding to a question in the Knesset, the Prime Minister stated categorically that the late President John F. Kennedy had not promised Israel that the U.S. Sixth Fleet would intervene if Israel's existence were threatened. It had been widely believed that President Kennedy had made this promise in exchange for an Israel promise that Israel would not produce nuclear weapons.

New Field Rank Established By Army, Conferred On Territorial Administrators

TEL AVIV, July 23 (JTA)--The Israel Army of Defense introduced a new field rank yesterday -- Tat Alouf, the equivalent of brigadier general -- to be conferred on senior officers holding territorial administrative posts. The insignia of rank is crossed swords and olive branches.

The new rank was conferred by the Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Chaim Bar-Lev today at General Headquarters on Motta Gur, Military Governor of the Gaza Strip and Sinai, who commanded the paratroop brigade which took East Jerusalem in the Six-Day War; Raphael Vardi, military governor of Judeaea; Ephraim Shlomo Gazit, who is in charge at GHQ of the administration of the occupied areas; and to others in Army administration posts.

East Germans Bar Land Passage, Israeli Sportsmen Forced To Fly To West Berlin

WEST BERLIN, July 23 (JTA)--A 30-member sports group from Israel had to fly here for a week's visit in response to an invitation from West German sport organizations after East German officials prevented the Israelis from making a land trip to this divided city. The East Germans had refused to recognize the validity of the collective passport of the Israeli group.

Farbstein Will Offer Bill Abolishing Poland's 'Most Favored Nation' Trade Status

WASHINGTON, July 23 (JTA)--Rep. Leonard Farbstein, New York Democrat, announced today the introduction of an amendment to the 1962 Trade Expansion Act which would suspend benefits of trade agreement concessions on products imported from Poland. "The amendment is in essence a negation of the 'most favored nation' trading privileges which the United States had extended to Poland since 1960," he said.

"Since 1963 the Communist state of Poland has benefitted from the terms of trade that are enjoyed by our oldest and most faithful allies — 'most favored nation' privileges. They were extended by the Administration in response to signs in Poland that the Government was creating a more liberal regime, one in which greater attention was given to human liberty," Mr. Farbstein said. Poland abused these privileges, he said, by returning "to a kind of abject Stalinism coupled with one of the most pernicious practices in which a state can engage — official anti-Semitism. There is no longer any excuse for such privileges," the Congressman asserted.

Senate Ignores Administration Opposition, Votes Bill Banning Egyptian Cotton

WASHINGTON, July 23 (JTA)--The Senate ignored Administration pleas yesterday and adopted a bill prohibiting the further import of Egyptian extra-long staple cotton. The action was taken on a voice vote after unsuccessful attempts by Allen J. Ellender, Democrat of Louisiana, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, to kill the measure.

The bill, sponsored by Senators Anderson and Montoya, New Mexico Democrats, was aimed at Egypt because that country severed diplomatic relations with the United States last year. The Senate acted after Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and Assistant Secretary of State Lucius D. Battle had pleaded that the bill be killed. Secretary Freeman had warned that passage of the bill would frustrate growing hopes of a re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Egypt. Mr. Battle warned that the measure would tend to disrupt normal economic relations in the Middle East. A similar measure barring the import of Egyptian cotton was recently adopted by the House of Representatives. Long staple cotton is the major Egyptian export.

Gruening Hits U.S. Aid To University In Cairo, Cites Egypt's Severed Relations

WASHINGTON, July 23 (JTA)--Senator Ernest Gruening, Alaska Democrat, today protested United States Government financial aid to "the so-called American University in Cairo" and questioned its legality. The Senator maintained that such aid was prohibited by an act of Congress. "The university is controlled by the Government of Egypt" and "American only in the sense that it is supported by U.S. funds," he asserted.

Speaking on the floor of the Senate, Sen. Gruening said such support violates the prohibition against furnishing aid to "countries severing relations with the U.S. Our economic assistance merely allowed President Nasser to divert his own resources to building up his military forces for a strike against Israel." Egypt broke diplomatic ties with the U.S. during the Six-Day War.

He asked the Federal General Accounting Office to determine whether disbursements made to the university in Cairo "should not be disallowed and a claim processed against Egypt." During the 1968 fiscal year the Cairo university received \$200,000 in appropriated funds and the equivalent of \$1 million in U.S.-owned Egyptian pounds from the Agency for International Development.

B'nai B'rith Young Adults Parley Finds 'Reasonable Moral Standards' Lacking

STARLIGHT, Pa. July 23 (JTA)--Delegates to the 23rd international convention of B'nai B'rith Young Adults agreed today that although "our generation lives in the midst of revolutionary change in moral practices, we look in vain for reasonable standards to be followed." They called for a colloquium of rabbis, behavioral scientists and youth leaders to seek as wide a consensus as possible on "morality for the 1970s."

The convention, in another resolution, held that involvement of youth in the struggle for progress, justice and equality was a better "mind-expanding" device than marijuana and LSD. It went on record as opposing the legalization of marijuana but said some of the harsher penalties for its use imposed on young offenders should be eased. The resolution warned that increasing use of hallucinatory drugs and "pep pills" could indicate profound social crisis.

Another resolution supported the efforts of Negro educators to introduce Afro-American studies in the classroom and declared that this trend should apply to the introduction of Hebrew courses wherever there is a sizeable Jewish student body. It said that "the use of Hebrew as the language of modern Israel and its significance to Western culture merit its recognition as a major subject of study in American classrooms." It urged that "the Jewish contribution to world civilization be adequately presented in the public schools curricula." The delegates also went on record as supporting President Johnson's recommendations to reduce the voting age to 18 and as approving proposed guaranteed annual wages and other measures to combat poverty.

Auxiliary Police Patrol Organized At Synagogue To Protect Queens Residents

NEW YORK, July 23 (JTA)--An Auxiliary Police Patrol, organized on July 15 at the Young Israel Synagogue of the Rockaways, a section in the borough of Queens, has been patrolling the area nightly in response to a growing series of burglaries and attacks on residents of the heavily Jewish area. Bernard Honig, a resident, took the lead in establishing the patrol of some 60 residents, which includes both Jews and Christians. Local Christian clergymen assisted in developing the patrol. The residents initially set up a Committee on Protection, which sponsored the patrol, whose members received training at the 101st Precinct. Patrol members ride through the area in pairs, watching for suspicious activities, which they report to the precinct station.