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Terrorist Hurls Grenade Into Athens El Al Office, Injuring 14 Persons--2 Seriously

ATHENS, Nov. 27(JTA)--An Arab terrorist hurled a hand grenade into a crowded downtown office of El Al, Israel's national airline, this morning, injuring at least 14 persons, two of them seriously. The explosion rocked busy Constitution Square, in the heart of the city, and caused extensive damage to El Al's packed lounge and its offices.

Athens police arrested Elias Dergarabetian, 23, a Jordanian member of a minor commando organization which cooperates with El Fatah, who admitted throwing the grenade. Also taken into custody were two other men fleeing the scene.

Among the injured were an American couple identified only as a Mr. and Mrs. McClain from Texas. They were taken to nearby Hypocration Hospital along with two Greek brothers, George Natsios, 2, who suffered head injuries and underwent brain surgery, and Athanasios, 5, who also suffered head injuries and was reportedly blinded. Also reported injured was Alphonse Dimeck, 29, a British national hired by El Al as a ticket collector.

The attack came almost 11 months to the day after two Arab terrorists attacked an El Al airliner at Athens airport, killing a passenger, 50-year-old marine engineer Leon Shirdan of Haifa. The terrorists, who attacked the plane Dec. 26, 1968, with submachineguns and grenades, face trial in Athens. There was an apparent misunderstanding a few days ago when Greek authorities said that their trial had been postponed indefinitely because it would hamper Greece's relations with the Arab states. Following a strong protest and diplomatic representations by the Israeli Government, another statement was issued saying that the Arabs would go on trial next February. The suspects are Mahmoud Issa Mohammed, 26, a teacher, and Maher Hussein Suleiman Elymani, 20, a student.

A spokesman for Israeli diplomatic interests in Athens said that "at 9:30 a.m. local time a taxi pulled up in front of the airline office. Two persons remained in it while one ran into the lounge, which was packed with people, and threw the grenade." Officials in Jerusalem described the blast as "a cold-blooded act of terrorism" and called for "the most severe punishment for those responsible."

Greek authorities said that Dergarabetian, the suspect, came to Athens on Monday on a special mission to attack the offices of El Al. Shalom Saadom, the Athens El Al manager, said the deadly grenade was thrown as passengers were checking in for a flight from Tel Aviv to New York during a rush hour period.

Two grenades were found on Dergarabetian, a tailor of Armenian origin. Police and passersby stopped the trio as they tried to escape. The street outside the terminal was crowded with pedestrians, cars and busses at the time. Trickle of blood were seen mixed with rain on the sidewalk. An eyewitness said, "it was a miracle nobody was killed with so many persons sitting in the office." An El Al woman employe said, "I heard a blast and I was so confused. When I turned around, I saw blood all over the place and some children were crying. A man next to me was lying on the floor. He was the ticket agent."

(In Amman Jordan, a spokesman for the little-known Arab guerrilla organization, the Popular Struggle Front, said, "we did it because El Al is an extension of the Israeli enemy." He said the grenade incident should serve as a warning to the public not to use El Al. Not much is known about the Front except that it was formed in East Jerusalem following the Six-Day War. Some of its cells were uncovered and its members were arrested. It then moved to Amman. It reportedly has carried out some minor operations against Israel, some in conjunction with El Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It reportedly joined the guerrilla coordinating organization, the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command, about four months ago.

(El Al's head office in Jerusalem said that all flights to and from Athens will continue as usual. Two El Al officials flew to Athens to help get the office back to normal. Repairs were expected to be costly. At the same time, the Israeli Government protested the incident to the Greek Government. An El Al spokesman said, "in spite of the vicious numerous attacks, El Al continues--and will continue--to fly on all its routes according to schedule. We do not anticipate any decrease in business. In fact, previous experience has shown the opposite to be the case.")

Attacks on El Al planes and offices began May 23, 1968 when a plane was hijacked following its take-off from Rome with 38 passengers and 10 crew members and was directed to the Algiers airport. On Sept. 1, 1968 the incident ended with the release of the plane after the passengers and crew had been released earlier. Following the Dec. 26, 1968 attack at Athens airport, Israel retaliated with a devastating assault on the airport of Beirut, where the Athens terrorists had come from, which destroyed 13 commercial airliners without taking any lives. On Feb. 18, 1969 Arab terrorists attacked an airliner at Zurich airport. And last Sept. 8, two grenades were hurled into an El Al office in Brussels, injuring one employe and a customer. In addition, a Trans-World Airliner was hijacked to Damascus, Syria last Aug. 29 by terrorists. All passengers were released except two Israelis who are still being held.

3 Arab Commandos, Israeli Go On Trial In Switzerland For Zurich Incident

WINTERHUR, SWITZERLAND, Nov.27(JTA)--Three Arab commandos charged with murder in an attack on an El Al airliner at Zurich's Klotten airport last Feb. 18, killing trainee pilot Yoram Peress, went on trial today and announced to the criminal court that they would not answer any questions. On trial at the same time was El Al security agent Mordechai Rachamim, 23, charged with manslaughter in the slaying of one of the attacking commandos. The Arabs could get possible sentences of five to 20 years; Mr. Rachamim could serve one to five years if convicted. The trial of the Arab commandos is the first of its kind in Europe.

Immediately after the proceedings opened, the three Arab defendants--two men and a woman--announced that they would abstain from the trial for several reasons: The proceedings which had been prepared were wrong because of faulty translation; two assigned lawyers had decided not to defend them and they refused to accept the current court-appointed lawyer, thus being without proper defense; and they placed their "fate and future in the hands of justice and world public opinion."

Mr. Rachamim told the court of his personal background which led to his joining the El Al security service in September, 1968. Since his release from prison, he said, he had worked for the Israeli Government but not in his previous capacity. More than 100 policemen guarding the courtroom heard him testify. Mr. Rachamim had been released on bail but the Arabs remained in jail. (The El Fatah Voice of the Storm radio station in Cairo today accused Switzerland of collusion with Israel in the trial, charging that the Swiss had unfairly discriminated in letting the Israeli go while the Arabs were kept in custody.)

Presiding judge Dr. Hans Gut told the defendants that their attitude would only hurt their case. "they have said previously that they wanted to awaken world opinion to their cause with the attack. The accused now have the opportunity to speak before the world. Why don't they use this opportunity? I acknowledge that a man must possess great courage to (attack a plane) in a foreign country. Where is that courage now?"

British Foreign Office Calls In Soviet Envoy For Talks Aimed At Big Four Resumption

WASHINGTON, Nov.27(JTA)--The British Foreign Office today summoned the Soviet Ambassador to Britain for discussions aimed at resuming Big Four talks on the Middle East, which have been stalled since last summer, it was reported here today. The Foreign Office announced the talks between Michael Sminovski, the Soviet envoy, and Evan Luard, parliamentary undersecretary of the Foreign Office.

(Meanwhile, in Moscow the Soviet Government and six Warsaw Pact allies today demanded immediate but unspecified steps to force Israel out of the occupied territories. The Soviet statement was regarded as one of the strongest in recent months by diplomatic sources.)

The meeting in London contrasted with the belief of Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, that the Soviet Government was no longer willing to play an "actively constructive role" in promoting a peace settlement. His remarks were prepared for testimony before a hearing of the foreign operations sub-committee of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Speaking of Big Four and American-Soviet bilateral efforts aimed at a settlement, Mr. Sisco declared: "Some progress has been achieved, but fundamental differences remain. Moreover, the attitude of the Soviet Government in the bilateral talks and in its public expressions raises doubts regarding its willingness to play an actively constructive role on behalf of peace in the Middle East."

(The New York Times reported today that American officials "are now conceding that the two-powers talks...are in danger of collapsing." Mr. Sisco and Soviet Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly F. Dobrynin, have not met for nearly a month. At the last meeting, the U.S. presented proposals that altered the U.S. position in favor of the Arab one, but to date no reply has been received from Moscow. The Egyptian Government has denounced the American position, apparently stalling Moscow action in response to Washington.)

Diplomatic analysts have said that before the Big Four resume their talks, the Big Two must reach some form of agreement. But now there has been a feeling growing in Britain and France--the other Big Power parties--that the top level consultations must resume, and both have accordingly been pressuring Washington to agree.

Sorenson Raps 'Dangerous' Attempt By Nixon To 'Link U.S. Policy In Vietnam With Israel's'

NEW YORK, Nov.27(JTA)--Theodore Sorenson, one time aide to the late President John F. Kennedy, denounced here today the "dangerous and deliberate attempt" by the Nixon Administration to "link American policy in Vietnam with American policy in Israel." In a Thanksgiving address at Kehillath Yeshurun synagogue, he said President Nixon "and his aides have explicitly solicited support for his Vietnam stance from Jewish leaders in this country and from Prime Minister Golda Meir" of Israel. He added that they had implied, "not always subtly, that this country could not sustain its commitments to Israel if it did not sustain its commitments to the regime in Saigon."

He cited the "swelling tide of opposition in this country to further prosecution of the Vietnam war, opposition that may reach the stage of revulsion once the facts about the recently disclosed massacres" in Viet Nam "sink in." He declared "it would not be in Israel's interest to have the Vietnam and Middle East situations linked in the public mind."

Israeli Jet, Aircraft Downs Egyptian MIG-21 and Bomber In Action Over Suez Canal

TEL AVIV, Nov.27(JTA)--Two Egyptian planes, one a MIG-21 and the other a Sukhoi-7 bomber, were shot down today as they attacked Israeli positions along the Suez Canal's central sector. One Israeli soldier was injured. One plane was downed by an Israeli jet, the other by anti-aircraft fire.

State First Conference Of Jewish Communities Of Australasia And Southeast Asia

LONDON, Nov.27(JTA)--The first conference of Jewish communities of Australasia and Southeast Asia will convene in Sydney, Australia Nov.30-Dec. 1, it was reported here. The conference will be attended by Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, and Dr. Gerhard M. Riegner, secretary general. The conference was called by Gerald Y. Falk, president of the executive council of Australian Jewry, to establish closer links between the Australian and Asian communities. The executive council is affiliated with the World Jewish Congress.

Court Trying Rohan Recedes To Deliberate, Will Reconvene To Announce Verdict

JERUSALEM, Nov.27(JTA)--The court trying Denis Michael Rohan for setting fire to the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem--Islam's third holiest shrine--last Aug. 21 recessed yesterday and will reconvene to announce its decision. He faces 44 years in prison. Since there is no jury procedure in Israel, the court will determine factual and judicial findings.

Mr. Rohan's attorney, Yitzhak Tunik, said in his summation that his client is not guilty under Israeli law for he had acted out of an "irresistible impulse" caused by mental illness.

Mr. Tunik recommended that the 28-year-old former sheepherder, be confined to a mental institution. The lawyer noted that all the medical evidence given at the trial agreed that Rohan suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and had committed his crime under compulsion of that illness. He cited judgments handed down by the Israel Supreme Court as precedents for waiving punishment. Mr. Tunik's contention that Rohan could not be held responsible for his act contradicted a statement last week by the prosecuting attorney, Meir Shamgar, that the defendant despite his illness, knew perfectly well what he was doing when he set fire to the shrine and knew that he was violating Israeli law. Legal observers said that if the court accepts the defense counsel's argument, it was possible that Rohan would not be confined to a mental hospital here but would be deported to his native Australia.

Israel's Television Service Runs Into Controversy Over Question Of Personal Opinion

JERUSALEM, Nov.27(JTA)--Israel's infant television services is already experiencing some of the troubles that beset its much older counterpart in the United States. They involve the question of where to draw the line between public service and personal opinion.

The Israeli Broadcasting Authority, a quasi-government body, was expected to exercise stricter supervision over what is broadcast following an alleged breach of the rules laid down for TV performers. The incident involved a popular stage and TV personality, Dan Ben Amotz, who runs a highly personalized interview show on Israel's only TV channel. Ben Amotz recently made an unsuccessful bid for a Knesset seat on the "Peace List," a small faction that advocates Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. On a recent show, he criticized Defense Ministry policies in the occupied territories, especially the policies of punishing suspected terrorist collaborators. Mr. Ben Amotz also interviewed a local rabbi on the controversial subject of Sabbath TV.

The Broadcasting Authority claims that he violated the rules on two counts--first that an interviewer should keep his personal opinions off the air, and second, that a subject such as Sabbath TV which is under judicial consideration, should not be discussed, especially as it involves the Broadcasting Authority itself.

In another development, the Foreign Ministry asked the Broadcasting Authority to clear interviews with Israeli Ambassadors abroad with the ministry before they even approach the envoy to appear. The Authority promptly agreed. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said in reply to questions that the ambassadors have not been ordered to clear their TV appearances in advance with the ministry. The Israeli envoy most frequently seen and heard on Israeli radio and TV is Gen. Yitzhak Rabin, the Ambassador to the United States.

Draft Bill Aimed At Possible 'Pirate' Stations Off Coast Of Israel

JERUSALEM, Nov.27(JTA)--Apparently mindful of the controversial and highly profitable "pirate stations" which operated in recent years off the coast of Britain, the Ministry of Justice is drafting a bill that would inhibit any such activity off Israel. The measure would be aimed at preventing commercial broadcasts to Israel by ships outside her territorial waters. Commercial are the property and monopoly of the Broadcasting Authority which is owned by the State, Ministry sources explain.

The Government cannot actively interfere with such marine stations but the bill would prohibit wireless contact with them from the coast. No services would be given to any such ship in Israel ports. Sanctions would be applied to individuals having contact with a floating station --suppliers of food, equipment, phonograph records. The bill, Ministry sources hastened to point out, is not aimed at Able Nathan who has announced plans for a "Peace Ship" that would broadcast messages to Israel and the Arab states from the Mediterranean.

Mark 25th Anniversary of PATWA, Which Has Brought 40,000 Professionals To Israel

JERUSALEM, Nov.27(JTA)--They pronounce it patois but it's initials are PATWA--the acronym for Professional and Technical Workers Aliya. To Israel, PATWA has had enormous significance. And its value as a movement during the past 25 years was marked here at a quarter-century anniversary press conference.

Founded in London, PATWA has brought 40,000 British professionals to Israel as immigrants, many of whom are prominent today. Among them are Avraham Harman, current Hebrew University president; Walter Eytan, Israel's Ambassador to France; and Dr. Eli Davis, professor of internal medicine at the Hadassah Hospital. They praised PATWA's efforts yesterday. PATWA was incorporated into the Jewish Agency a few years after its establishment and offices were opened in the United States and other countries.

Christian-Jewish Consultative Committee Asks Oberammergau To Avoid Play Anti-Semitism

LONDON, Nov. 27(JTA)--The controversial Oberammergau passion play, slated to be presented in the West German village in 1970, has drawn the attention of the International Consultative Committee of Organization for Christian-Jewish Cooperation. A spokesman said that the Committee, following a Luxembourg meeting, sent a letter to the town's authorities asking that any portions of the play which might give anti-Semitic offense to Jews be deleted. Mayor Ernst Zwink of Oberammergau has given assurances that no such passages appear in the revised text of the play which, given every decade, is already a sell-out. Committee members present at the meeting came from Austria, Belgium, Britain, France, West Germany, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Israel.

(The passion play's management has decided in principle not to alter the traditional text and will retain passages which are regarded as anti-Semitic, West German television reported yesterday. Only minor points in the 100-year-old text were being changed, it was reported.)

Kiel Court Probes Alleged World War II Murders Of Overtime Schleswig-Holstein Minister

LUEBECK, West Germany, Nov. 27(JTA)--A man who was justice minister in Kiel, the capital of the West German state of Schleswig-Holstein, is under investigation by a court here for alleged participation in the murder of Polish Jews during World War II. Hans Adolf Asbach was accused of participation in the murder of at least 700 of the 1,148 Jews of Brzezanya, Galicia.

(On the West German political front, five leading members of the Hesse branch of the purportedly neo-Nazi National Democratic Party have quit in protest against the chairmanship of Adolf von Thadden.)

Britain's Chief Rabbi Distressed By World Jewry's Attitude Toward Arab Refugees

CHICAGO, Nov. 27(JTA)--Britain's Chief Rabbi today appeared to find fault with the Jewish world's attitudes toward Arab refugees and called for a greater measure of compassion for them. Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits told the opening meeting of the national leadership conference of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America that "we must manifest much more clearly our sensitivity to the humanitarian aspects of the Arab refugee problem."

He told some 800 delegates and guests that "we must re-establish, for the state of Israel and for the entire Jewish people, the classic, authentic image of the Jew whose hallmark has always been compassionate identification with the weak, the needy, the suffering and the persecuted, wherever they may be."

The Chief Rabbi told the parley that "the double standard of morality and justice so patently applied by the nations (of the world) to Israel is indicative of the fact that somehow Israel has not fulfilled their expectations. These expectations lie in the moral and religious dimension and are not satisfied by its political and economic advances."

He expressed distress that "the present image of Israel is not fulfilling the moral quest and yearning of many of our young people who feel a void when confronted by the present rather harsh image of self-reliance which Israel presents to the world. Deplorably, some of them have even joined our enemies and propagate the so-called Arab cause."

On the issue of the so-called "vanishing Jew," the rabbi said that "this term must be understood in its dual meaning. Some vanish because they lose their identification with the Jewish people; they assimilate and leave us. We lose others because they are not being born. Our gravest problem today is the low birth rate of Jews everywhere."

Only the "strictly Orthodox community" is "not affected by the lower birth rate. This community consistently and appreciably increases in numbers," Rabbi Jakobovits said. Only the Orthodox community "maintains the allegiance and loyalty of its youth thanks to its superior educational institutions and well-designed youth activities, such as those pioneered by the National Conference of Synagogue Youth of the Orthodox Union." The rabbi called for creation of a "top-level international commission to study the problem of Jewish communal and personal disintegration and to propose programs of action to the Jewish communities here and abroad." His suggestion was welcomed by Rabbi Joseph Karasick, Orthodox Union president.

Jewish Agency's Dulzin 'Very Strongly' Urges ZOA To Join American Federation

NEW YORK, Nov. 27(JTA)--The treasurer of the Jewish Agency for Israel "very strongly" urged the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) today to join other American Zionist groups in forming the proposed American Zionist Federation. The call was issued by Leon Dulzin, on the eve of his departure for South America to meet with Latin American Jewish leadership in connection with a proposed reorganization of the Jewish Agency.

The ZOA has until now declined to participate in negotiations leading to organization of an American federation which was mandated by the last World Zionist Congress. Jacques Torczyner, ZOA president, said recently that the organization's National Executive Committee felt participation would "inevitably impair, curtail and lead to the liquidation of the traditional functions and activities of the ZOA."

In South America, Mr. Dulzin will meet on the Jewish Agency reorganization question with Jewish leaders of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay and Central American countries. The plans calls for separation of the World Zionist Organization from fund-raising aspects of the Agency and its expansion to include non-Zionist fund raising leadership throughout the Diaspora. The plan is expected to be formally ratified at a meeting of the Zionist General Council (Actions Committee) in Jerusalem in February.