

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. XXXVI - Fifty-Second Year

Wednesday, December 31, 1969

No. 247

AFL-CIO Head Condemns U.S. Mideast Policy Shift As Appeasement Attempt

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 (JTA)--President George Meany of the AFL-CIO, speaking for the American trade union movement, called upon the U.S. Government today to "cease bartering away the freedom of Israel and trying to appease Soviet and Arab dictators." Mr. Meany addressed a special press conference because he viewed Israel's plight as critical and thought too little public attention was focussed upon the Nixon Administration's "change of direction." He called for the supply of Phantom jet planes and other arms to Israel to maintain a balance of power.

The union leader openly charged that "big business interests" were influencing the Administration against Israel. He said that "certain American bankers and oil interests" were concerned about investments in Arab states. He said that foreign policy should not be determined by "the profit picture."

Mr. Meany asked the government to "insist that the only mechanism to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East is direct negotiations," rather than an imposed big power "settlement." He said the United States itself would not accept a settlement imposed by other powers if American interests were at stake. He said that "no settlement imposed by outsiders on the parties directly involved will be lasting." In his view, "the Administration is changing direction. It is moving down the road of appeasement."

He said that "such appeasement would only give credit to the Soviets and Egypt for achieving through diplomatic blackmail and political maneuvering all they failed to win on the battlefield." He added that such appeasement was "unworthy of America."

Mr. Meany declared that "no statesman should ask the American people or Israel to forget the lesson of the events which followed the war of 1956. Our government then joined hands with the Soviets in forcing Israel to give up areas vital to her national security and the achievement of lasting peace in the Middle East." He expressed the view that Israel should use the occupied areas as a means of obtaining peace at a bargaining table. He said he thought Israel might return about 90 per cent of the territories if a real peace were secured.

Mr. Meany said he was confident that the views of American labor on Israel would become known to President Nixon.

State Dept. Tells Inquiring Congressmen There Is No Change In Mideast Policy

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Members of Congress disclosed today that they have been receiving a barrage of mail and telegrams from constituents protesting the alleged erosion of United States policy toward Israel and a Middle East settlement. When they ask for clarification from the State Department, these Congressmen are told that there has been no shift in U.S. policy toward Israel, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned today.

Inquiries at the White House and the State Department have elicited Administration responses which ranged from insistence that there is no change to hints that there may be differences between President Richard M. Nixon and Secretary of State William P. Rogers, these Congressmen say. But one highly placed Congressional source said that key administration leaders were told at a White House briefing that the U.S. is taking steps to assure that it does not become embroiled in a Mideast war as Israel's partner which could lead to a confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Rep. Seymour Halpern, a New York Republican who wrote to Secretary of State Rogers for a clarification of his Dec. 9 speech on the Mideast, said the reply he received was "an obvious evasion of the erosion of the U.S. position on Israel." The reply was written by H.G. Torbert, Jr., acting Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. Mr. Torbert claimed that the Israel Government itself "recognized" that no change of U.S. attitude had occurred. He cited an interview on Dec. 3 in which he said Foreign Minister Abba Eban of Israel acknowledged that the latest American proposals on the territorial issue did not differ from the American position held since the June, 1967 war.

Letter Ignored Secretary Rogers' Subsequent Statement

Mr. Torbert's letter ignored Secretary Rogers' subsequent statement which alarmed Israel. According to Mr. Torbert U.S. policy continues to be based on the Security Council's Nov. 22, 1967 Mideast resolution which calls for a just and lasting peace and rejects the acquisition of territory by force of arms. The resolution envisions Israel's eventual withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories but, Mr. Torbert wrote, the U.S. continues to "stand firmly on the position that Israel should not be expected to withdraw its forces from any occupied territory except in the context of peace and security based on mutually binding commitments agreed upon between it and its neighbors."

In response to Rep Halpern's request for clarification of Mr. Rogers' Dec. 9 remarks on Jerusalem and the Arab refugees, Mr. Torbert alleged that press accounts had been "misleading." He

said "The Secretary did not propose how Jerusalem should be governed or accord any special status to the Palestinian Arabs or offer any comfort to terrorist acts."

Russian Ships Reported Trying To Trail Five Gunboats Heading Toward Israel

LONDON, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Five gunboats speeding across the Mediterranean in the direction of Israel were reported today to be "playing tag" with Soviet ships trying to shadow them. The Royal Air Force has also appeared on the scene.

The flotilla was reported by one observer to have separated, but all five of the boats were reportedly sighted off Crete yesterday with about 600 miles to go before reaching Israel. They were said to be encountering strong winds and heavy rain which made only brief observation of them possible.

A Daily Express correspondent reported from Malta that he flew within 300 feet of two of the gunboats yesterday but the other three were nowhere to be seen. He said two Soviet ships that looked like tankers maneuvered close to the gunboats' course but were soon left behind by the small craft that were making their top speed of 40 knots. The correspondent said that two RAF Canberras dived down to within 1,200 feet of the Russian ships and also criss-crossed the two gunboats. According to the correspondent, there was no sign of any Israeli naval escort. The gunboats were reported to have made rendezvous with Israeli naval units between Sicily and Sardinia Sunday and to have refueled from an Israeli tanker.

Maritime sources said the gunboats were moving steadily toward Israel keeping well north of the Egyptian shoreline. They were expected to pass between Crete and Rhodes before making the open sea run to Israel where they were expected to arrive late tomorrow or Thursday.

Israel Maintains Official Silence On Gunboats And Weighs Political Effects

JERUSALEM, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Israel continued today to maintain strict official silence over the affair of the five gunboats that defied the French arms embargo and are reportedly on their way to Israel. But measures that might be taken by France to demonstrate its displeasure were reportedly the subject of day-long consultations at the Israel Foreign Ministry.

Political sources here said Israel was considering the possibility that France would recall Ambassador Francis Hure. Israelis were also prepared for a more militantly anti-Israel stand by France both in the international arena and in bilateral relations with Israel. France is one of the four Big Powers -- along with the United States, Soviet Russia and Britain -- currently engaged in discussions of a settlement of the Middle East conflict.

The Israeli Embassy in Paris has reportedly requested another meeting with the French Foreign Ministry and the Government here is said to be awaiting a report on its outcome. Israel's Ambassador to France, Walter Eytan, is home on leave. The Israeli charge d'affaires in Paris, Eytan Ron, was reportedly rebuked yesterday by French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann over the gunboat affair. Mr. Ron was said to have disavowed all knowledge of the gunboats.

French Debate Action Against Israel, French Officials On Embargo Evasion

PARIS, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Political circles said today that the French Government will severely discipline certain high ranking officials who are believed to have collaborated with Israelis in the gunboat affair. The official most frequently mentioned yesterday as facing punishment was Gen. Louis Bonte, who heads the interministerial commission on arms exports which approved the sale of the gunboats to a Norwegian "front" firm, Starboat & Weill S.A. The commission did not check out the firm, which proved to be registered in Panama and has close connections to Israel.

Other less prominent officials of the ministries of finance and transport reportedly will face charges of collusion with Israel. They were responsible for customs and port formalities that somehow failed to prevent the five embargoed gunboats from slipping out of Cherbourg on Christmas Day, unnoticed by the harbor master and without official clearance.

French action with regard to these officials -- and the nature of the Government's response to Israel -- will not be known until tomorrow's Cabinet meeting. A severance of diplomatic relations with Israel has not been excluded. But informed sources here said a strong diplomatic protest was more likely.

France is also expected to declare the Israeli Defense Ministry representative in Europe, Rear Admiral Mordechai Limon, persona non grata. According to the French Defense Ministry, Admiral Limon wrote a letter renouncing all Israeli claims to the gunboats after their purported sale to Norway.

The embarrassment of the Pompidou Government -- and its concern over the effects the gunboat affair might have on Franco-Arab relations -- appears to be authentic. Knowledgeable sources here discounted speculation that France may have "looked the other way" while the Israelis made off with the gunboats which they had paid for in full. The reasoning behind such speculation was that the Government wanted to mollify pro-Israel elements, especially those in Gaullist ranks, and to take some of the onus off a controversial \$400 million arms deal reportedly made with Libya. Sources here said today that the Government now would probably hasten the Libyan deal that is said to include as many as 50 Mirage jets and 200 tanks, in order to appease Arab anger over the gunboat affair.

(In Cairo, an official spokesman accused Israel of "stealing" the gunboats and warned nations dealing with Israel that the latter "respects neither sovereignty nor legality").

Presidents' Conference Protests To France Against Pro-Arab, Anti-Israel Stand

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA)--The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations charged today that French foreign policy placed France "at the side of Russia in fanning the fires of conflict in the Middle East." The charge was contained in a telegram to the French Ambassador in Washington, Charles Lucet, protesting a reported \$400 million French arms deal with Libya. The Jewish leadership group said it was "dismayed by the evident pro-Arab, anti-Israel stand" of the French Government.

"Having entered into an arms deal with Libya to supply the most sophisticated planes and tanks, the French administration at the same time continues its inequitable embargo on the supply of essential defense material to Israel in breach of its international agreement," the telegram said. It said that "Libya's alliance with Egypt and its own lack of need for such quantities of advanced weaponry make clear the ultimate destination of these arms."

The telegram noted that French President Georges Pompidou plans to visit the United States early next year. It urged him "to reassert the traditional French position of concern for human values by lifting its embargo against Israel, a small people bent only on surviving." He added that "we with our fellow Americans would hope to be able to welcome France's President as the representative of a government which will have abandoned power machinations in the competition for oil and illusory Arab power and which will once again have proclaimed its greatness by supporting the cause of justice and peace."

Court Rules Rohan Insane, Orders Him Confined In Mental Institution

JERUSALEM, Dec. 30 (JTA)--A Jerusalem district court decreed today that the Australian sheep-herder, Michael Denis William Rohan, was not punishable under Israeli law for burning the El Aksa mosque in East Jerusalem last Aug. 21 because he suffered from a mental illness. The court ordered him committed to a mental hospital but did not specify where. Observers said that Rohan, who is in Israel on a visitor's visa, may be deported to Australia.

Defense counsel Itzhak Tunk said he would not appeal the verdict, but prosecuting attorney Meir Shamgar said he might take it to the Israeli Supreme Court.

The president of the court which tried Rohan, Judge Henry Eli Baker, announced the verdict which took two hours to read. He said there was no doubt that the accused had committed the acts charged against him. But he suffered from a mental ailment that was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia which caused him "to live in a world of delusions." According to the court, his illness was responsible for an "irresistible impulse" that was pathological and Rohan could not be said to have exercised volition in the accepted legal sense of the term. He could not therefore be held responsible for his action at the time. The court said that Rohan's mental illness still existed and therefore he was ordered confined to a mental institution at the pleasure of the Minister of Justice.

Rohan sat calmly through the reading of the verdict. He left the court accompanied by a police guard without saying a word.

British Say Israelis Have Destroyed Egypt's Radar Network, Missile Bases

LONDON, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Continuous Israeli aerial bombardment has virtually destroyed Egyptian radar and missile sites in the Suez Canal zone, according to two British newspaper correspondents recognized as among the best informed persons on events in the Middle East.

Clare Hollingworth, writing in the Daily Telegraph, said that in November Israel began to systematically destroy SAM ground-to-air missile bases on the west shore of the Suez Canal. She said that reports from Algerian and Sudanese officers on the canal front suggested that the Israelis were "amazingly successful" in the way they knocked out base after base. The raids were followed by concerted attacks on Egyptian radar stations not only in the canal zone but on the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria, Miss Hollingworth reported.

The Daily Mail's Mideast correspondent, Christopher Dobson, said the attacks on the radar and missile bases "have been so heavy and so sustained and accurate that Egypt is now virtually defenseless against air attack." Mr. Dobson said Egyptian fighters no longer challenge Israeli planes and Egyptian anti-aircraft gunners rarely score a hit. Mr. Dobson said "fear remains that the temptation to deal finally with Egypt will be too great for the eagles in the Israeli cabinet."

Israeli Will Not Seek Further Loans From International Monetary Fund

JERUSALEM, Dec. 30 (JTA)--A Finance Ministry spokesman said today that Israel will not apply for further loans from the International Monetary Fund because of the conditions imposed by it. He said the IMF would probably demand that Israel reduce its foreign exchange expenditures which cannot be done owing to the requirements of national defense and immigration.

He said the IMF granted loans above a country's quota provided that their purpose was to bridge a temporary gap in the country's foreign exchange position.

The ministerial committee on economic affairs announced yesterday that the sale of foreign mutual funds in Israel will be permitted in the future provided that the companies comply with a list of stringent requirements. Two foreign-based mutual funds have been operating in Israel for the past two years. About 20 applications have been received from other funds but have been left pending.

Say Agnew Speeches Caused New Wave Of Public Expression Of Anti-Semitism

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 (JTA)--A team of Washington correspondents charged today that Vice President Spiro Agnew's speeches against the press and television has had the "unintentional effect" of creating "a renewed wave of public expression of anti-Semitism." Writing in the Washington Post, columnists Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden said the effect of the speeches was noticeable immediately in the "obscene phone calls protesting 'Jew-Commies' on the air" and in the "avalanche of sick mail" received by Norman B. Isaacs, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

The columnists asserted that "obviously Agnew did not intend to spray kerosene on a banked fire. But the language he used was the same country club English which has put him in trouble before." They noted that the Vice President's charge that the American press and television was controlled by a small group of men in New York and Washington had "produced a Pavlovian reaction."

They pointed out that "the theme that America's press and television is controlled and dominated by a small group of Jews in New York and Washington is dominant among the anti-Semitic lunatic fringe and has been so, at least since the days preceding World War II when the German-American Bund made it an article of faith in order to counteract a press increasingly critical of Adolf Hitler."

Mr. Agnew, the columnists reported, "was unprepared for the reaction from the lunatic right and he has instructed his staff to answer mail in praise of his alleged anti-Semitism by disclaiming it."

The "little group" of men who control American communications - if there is one - the columnists asserted, "is white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant - as any headcount of the owners of American media will reveal. But professional anti-Semites are undisturbed by facts. Unless Agnew can escape their embrace, he may one day worry about the political consequences."

Thirteen Defense League Members Arrested In Anti-Soviet Demonstrations

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Thirteen youthful members of the controversial Jewish Defense League and its national director, Rabbi Meir Kahane, were arrested yesterday after a series of coordinated actions against Soviet property in Manhattan and at Kennedy Airport. All but five were booked on charges that include assault, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct and juvenile delinquency. Those released included a 14 year-old boy.

According to Rabbi Kahane, his group was protesting the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union. Several youths painted slogans on a Soviet airliner shortly after it arrived at Kennedy Airport from Moscow. A Port Authority spokesman said two of them handcuffed themselves to the nosewheel of the Ilyushin-62 airliner. Others daubed the words "Am Yisroel Chai" (the Israel Nation Lives) on the plane's doors.

A similar slogan was painted on the walls of the office of Tass, the Soviet news agency, in Rockefeller Plaza which was invaded by Rabbi Kahane and four other JDL members. The rest of the demonstrators were taken into custody after they invaded the midtown offices of Intourist, the Soviet tourist bureau.

The Jewish Defense League was established, according to Rabbi Kahane, an Orthodox rabbi, in order to protect Jewish lives and property in racially tense urban areas. Its activities have been repudiated by most major American Jewish organizations.

Pittsburgh Jews To Observe Sabbath 'Mobilization Of Conscience'

PITTSBURGH, Dec. 30 (JTA)--The Pittsburgh Jewish community will observe this Sabbath as a "mobilization of conscience" and an expression of solidarity with Israel. A call for observance was issued by the Rabbinical Fellowship of Greater Pittsburgh and the community relations committee of the United Jewish Federation.

Pittsburgh Jewish residents were asked to fill their synagogues this Friday evening and Saturday to mobilize the public conscience and to pray for a peace without appeasement for Israel. Rabbis were asked to devote their sermons to the dangers to the United States and to Israel which could result from the erosion of American policy on the Middle East.

Albert Parker Elected To Head Bar Ilan University Governing Board

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Albert Parker, national chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, has been elected chairman of the board of overseers of Bar-Ilan University at Ramat Gan. His election was announced here by Dr. Joseph Lookstein, chancellor of the university. The board is the American governing body of the university. Mr. Parker is active in a number of Jewish causes. He is a New York resident.

Dead Sea Scrolls Temporarily Withdrawn From Public Viewing In Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, Dec. 30 (JTA)--Only two of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls are presently on display at the Israel Museum. The rest have been withdrawn until leak-proof helium-filled display cases can be manufactured, according to Dr. Magen Broshi, curator of the Shrine of the Book. The helium is required to preserve the ancient parchments.

Dr. Broshi said the cases had been manufactured by a firm in England which has gone out of business and the Museum is looking for a new manufacturer. Visitors to the Museum may see the Habakuk Commentary, which is in a helium-filled glass case, and the Manual of Discipline parchment, which is in good condition and does not presently require helium protection.