

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. XXXVII - Fifty-Third Year

Monday, January 5, 1970

No. 2

Cabinet Expected To Present \$2.85 Billion Budget For New Fiscal Year

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Cabinet is expected to present a 10 billion pound (\$2.85 billion) national budget to the Knesset for approval shortly. The budget was discussed at today's Cabinet meeting.

Although no details were released, the new budget is estimated to be ten percent higher than the previous budget. The increase does not correspond to the increase in national income but is considered essential to meet Israel's mounting needs. Another Cabinet meeting on the budget will be held to decide how to raise the necessary revenue. Nothing has been announced yet but increases in taxes and certain customs duties are expected.

Minister Without Portfolio Victor Shemtov said in a weekend radio broadcast that the burden on Israeli taxpayers would be increased IL 350 million (\$100 million) this year in new taxes but he said the Government did not plan an economic slowdown or currency devaluation. He said the tax increases were intended as an anti-inflationary measure and to refill the state's depleted treasury. He predicted that the Meir administration would take drastic economic measures during its first 100 days.

Two MIG 2Is - Possibly A Third - Shot Down In Dogfight Over Egypt

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Israeli fighters shot down two Soviet-made Egyptian MIG-21 jets and scored hits on a third in an aerial dogfight deep over Egyptian territory today. A military spokesman said no Israeli planes were lost although Cairo has claimed that one Israeli jet was shot down.

The fight erupted as Egyptian fighters appeared over the northern section of the Suez Canal zone to challenge Israeli planes carrying out their daily raids on Egyptian artillery positions and other military installations along the waterway. Israeli jets chased the Egyptian MIGs about 30 miles west of the canal and reported that two of them exploded in mid-air and a third was trailing smoke. The Israeli planes returned to their bombing and strafing mission and were not challenged again, a military spokesman said.

Israel Air Force jets blasted Egyptian artillery and anti-aircraft positions in the northern sector of the Suez Canal zone yesterday and returned safely to their bases. A military spokesman reported that five Israeli soldiers were wounded in mining incidents and small arms fire in the canal zone over the week-end.

Foray Into Lebanon Seizes Hostages For Return Of Captured Israeli Guard

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Israeli special forces units entered Lebanon Friday night and collected 22 hostages -- nine soldiers and 13 civilians -- without firing a shot. Three of the civilians were returned to Lebanon today after an investigation absolved them of suspicion that they were saboteurs, a military spokesman announced.

The hostages, all male, were believed to have been taken as a consequence of the kidnapping of a 54 year-old Israeli farmer, Shmuel Rosenwasser, by Arab guerrillas while he was on guard duty at Metullah near the Lebanese border on New Year's Day.

Rosenwasser was the first Israeli civilian kidnapped by guerrillas. The Cabinet today discussed means of securing his prompt release without according the guerrillas -- in this case El Fatah -- recognition as a belligerent. El Fatah has demanded the release of its own "prisoners of war" by Israel in return for Rosenwasser. Such an exchange however would implicitly grant captured El Fatah guerrillas and saboteurs POW status and would place them under the protection of the Geneva Convention. El Fatah failed to gain such status at the last International Red Cross conference at Istanbul where it was ruled that the guerrilla organization did not meet some of the conditions laid down by the Geneva Convention.

Responsibility For Captured Israeli Could Be Placed On Lebanese Government

The taking of hostages in Lebanon could place responsibility for Rosenwasser's release squarely on Lebanese Government authorities in Beirut.

The operation was meticulous and daring although Lebanese Army units offered so little opposition that the Israeli forces didn't bother to return their fire. The Israelis crossed the Lebanese border in two columns. One column of infantry entered Qalla village and rounded up 13 men after peacefully evacuating all women and children. The youngsters were quieted with chewing gum and candy. The men went along with their captors without resistance.

The second Israeli column, headed by a halftrack, entered a Lebanese border post with headlights blazing and took over a three-story police station. They found nine Lebanese soldiers huddled inside, all fully armed but offering no resistance. The police station was evacuated and then demolished by Israeli sappers. The column recrossed the Israeli border with its prisoners.

American Military Believed Interested In Captured Soviet-Built Radar Unit

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Weizmann Institute of Science issued a denial today that it was studying a top secret Soviet built radar unit that Israeli commandos brought back intact from Egypt after a raid on the Ras Ghareb coastal defense station near the Gulf of Suez a week ago. The seven-ton unit, one of the most modern pieces of Soviet equipment in Egypt, was airlifted into Israeli territory by cargo helicopter after it was carefully cut into two sections of manageable size. The institute emphasized that it does not engage in "secret arms research."

Meanwhile it was learned that the Israel Government expects United States military authorities to request permission to inspect the radar unit. An unidentified American officer was quoted here as declaring that his country would be "most interested" in looking over the Soviet radar which is designed to detect low-flying aircraft.

The seized radar unit is known by its code name, P121. It has a range of just under 300 miles and was linked to Soviet-built ground-to-air missiles forming a defense system against attacking planes flying low over land or sea. It was low-flying Israeli planes coming in from the sea that destroyed the Egyptian Air Force in the first hours of the June 1967 Six-Day War.

The story of the "radar snatch" broke Friday exactly one week after the raid occurred. Israeli censors released it after an account was published by the Daily Express in London, but the feat was an open secret here for days. The official Israeli account of the raid merely stated that it had been successful and that four Egyptian prisoners were taken. The prisoners turned out to be Russian-trained Egyptian technicians who manned the radar unit. They were unarmed. Egyptian soldiers guarding the base fled after putting up token resistance.

Israel Wanted To Keep News Of Capture A Secret

According to the account published in the Daily Express and later confirmed here, the Israeli commandos were surprised to find a brand new Russian-made radar unit at Ras Ghareb and realized that they had come across a prize. They called for cargo helicopters and for acetylene torches and other equipment with which they proceeded to cut the seven-ton radar unit into two sections of three and four tons each for air lifting.

The feat was deliberately kept quiet. According to one source, the official reasoning was that a public embarrassment would lead Moscow to regain lost prestige by providing the Egyptians with more expensive and modern equipment. Secrecy, it was felt, might cause Soviet authorities to reconsider their military assistance program to Egypt. There is little doubt here that the Soviets are seriously concerned that some of their most advanced military equipment is falling into Western hands by means of its capture from the Arabs by Israel.

Technical sources here said the latest "haul" should enable Israel to develop jamming systems that will eliminate the Egyptian advantage in advanced radar technique. The Ras Gharab raid is also believed to have completed the disruption of the Egyptian missile defense system throughout the Suez area, a process that began with almost daily air raids on canal zone installations starting last September. The raids knocked out Egyptian artillery and Russian-made SAM ground-to-air missile sites. The SAM system is basically designed against high flying aircraft and compelled the world's air forces to develop new low-level attack systems.

The Israeli Air Force has apparently perfected the low-level attack and forced the Russians to equip their Egyptian clients with new radar that could detect low-flying jets. Israeli sources said the elimination of the Ras Ghareb base would force Egypt to deploy more forces in that area, reducing its forces on the Suez Canal front.

Prosecution Drops Plan To Appeal Sentence On Rohan, Mosque Arsonist

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The state prosecutor has decided not to appeal the verdict by a Jerusalem district court committing Denis Michael William Rohan to a mental hospital for burning the El Aksa mosque in East Jerusalem last Aug. 21. The court ruled last Tuesday that the 28 year-old Australian shepherd was legally insane and therefore not punishable under Israeli law.

Mirage Planes Bought By Israel Shifted To New Base In Central France.

PARIS, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Israel has apparently concluded that the French Government will not release its 50 embargoed Mirage supersonic jets in the near future and has withdrawn all of its air crews and maintenance personnel that have been standing by the planes, it was learned today. The air crews left France six months ago and the maintenance men were withdrawn about six weeks ago.

The planes themselves have been transferred from two bases at Istres and Bordeaux-Mérignac in southern and western France to Chateaudun, a huge central France airbase, where they are now being maintained by French Air Force crews and mechanics of the Dassault company which manufactured the Mirages. The French authorities apparently believe that surveillance of the planes will be easier at the inland base. The French have tightened surveillance since Israel took over five embargoed gunboats at Cherbourg on Christmas day and sailed them to Haifa. It was learned that French Air Force planes shadowed the gunboats during part of their voyage across the Mediterranean but made no attempt to stop them.

U.S. Jewish Leadership To Meet In Emergency Session On U.S. Policy Shifts

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A national emergency conference of Jewish leadership on Middle East peace has been called for Jan. 25-26 in Washington by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Rabbi Herschel Schacter, Conference chairman, said that participants will include representatives of all of the 24 constituent organizations of the Presidents Conference and that invitations were being extended to major leaders of Jewish communities and others.

The two-day emergency conference will be held against the background of rising concern in the American Jewish community over what has been described as a "serious erosion" in State Department policy on a Middle East settlement. In issuing the call for the meeting, Rabbi Schacter cited a Dec. 22 meeting between a Conference delegation and Secretary of State William P. Rogers, at which Rabbi Schacter conveyed to Mr. Rogers the Jewish community's "deep concern and apprehension" over recent United States proposals for a Middle East settlement.

After the meeting, Rabbi Schacter issued a statement warning that the United States plan for a Middle East settlement would "strengthen Arab intransigence and Soviet designs and lead to an imposed settlement rather than a negotiated peace between the parties -- the stated policy of our Government." The emergency meeting is expected to be the largest and most representative gathering of American Jewish leadership since a similar conference in Washington during the 1967 Six-Day War.

ZOA To Hold Rally In New York To Show Solidarity With Israel

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Zionist Organization of America announced it would hold a "solidarity rally with Israel" next Thursday evening at the Biltmore Hotel. Speakers will include Mrs. Ruth Tekoah, wife of the ambassador to the United Nations; Jacques Torczyner, president of the ZOA, and Herman L. Weisman, chairman of the ZOA national executive board.

State Dept. Says U.S. Is Ready To Resume Talks On Mideast With Soviet Union

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A State Department spokesman said Friday that the United States was prepared to resume bilateral talks with the Soviets on the Middle East "whenever the Russians wish" despite the Soviet rejection of the last U.S. proposals. The spokesman, Carl Barch, conceded that no talks were currently scheduled. He said the United States had not yet responded to the Soviet note of Dec. 23 but intended to do so.

The ambassadors of the Four Powers, who met in New York last week, arranged for their deputies to meet on Tuesday to try to detail the points of agreement in the Four Power talks to date, the points on which agreement appears to be fairly close and those on which the Four Powers remain wide apart. The ambassadors will review the results at a meeting on Jan. 13.

Interviewed on NBC-TV's "Today" show, this weekend, Ambassador Itzhak Rabin of Israel called on the United States and the Soviet Union to declare a "moratorium" on involvement in the Arab-Israel conflict. He said that the people of the Middle East should be allowed to solve their own problems and asserted that if this were done, nothing would "drag" the U.S. and the USSR into a Middle East confrontation.

Gen. Rabin voiced the hope that "the proper circles" in this country would draw the "proper conclusions" from the latest Soviet rebuff on American initiatives for Mideast peace. He said that the results in 1969 demonstrated the failure of efforts to solve the problem through the Soviet Union. The Middle East situation would be resolved, he said, only when the parties to the conflict entered into meaningful negotiations.

Israel Says It Acted Correctly In Gunboat Affair; Rejects Criticism

JERUSALEM, Jan. 4 (JTA)--The Government of Israel does not consider as justified any French action involving criticism of Israel or its representatives in the affair of the five gunboats that have arrived in Israel from Cherbourg, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said today. The Israeli Cabinet will have to approve the official Israeli reply to the French demand for the recall of Admiral Mordechai Limon, head of the Israeli arms purchasing mission in Europe. The statement came in response to questions.

(It was disclosed in Paris that Admiral Limon would leave for Israel next Friday. The admiral was said to have been deluged at his home and office with messages from French Army officers and civilians expressing sympathy and solidarity.)

Foreign Minister Abba Eban has been studying a report on the talk between French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann and Israel's Paris envoy, Walter Eytan, at which Israel was asked to recall the chief of the Israel purchasing mission in Europe. It was indicated that a detailed reply from the Israel Government would be transmitted to France within a few days.

The spokesman also said that Israel's view on the boat incident had been conveyed by Mr. Eban to French Ambassador Francis Hure earlier in the week. The Foreign Minister told the envoy that no Israeli party whatever had been involved in any illegal act in connection with the boats' transit. The spokesman said that the "unjustified" French arms embargo was the problem and not any incidents occurring as a result of the embargo's implementation.

(The first Soviet comment on the gunboat incident was an editorial in Pravda, the Soviet Communist Party paper, denouncing Israel's "theft of five gunboats from France." The paper militantly restated the Kremlin's intention to "liquidate the consequences of Israeli aggression in the Middle East.")

Sees Need For Reappraisal Of Policies On Aid To Soviet Jewry

TEL AVIV, Jan. 4 (JTA)--An official of the World Jewish Congress conceded today that the organization's efforts to secure full minority rights for Soviet Jewry have failed so far. Dr. Gerhart Riegner, general secretary of the WJC said the time had come for a "profound reappraisal of our policy toward the Soviet authorities."

Dr. Riegner said that would be one of the main topics at the meeting of the WJC's executive which opens here on Jan. 7. The Jewish communities in 65 countries will be represented at the parley, including delegations from Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Dr. Riegner said another major topic will be the widening generation gap and how to cope with it. The WJC will also take up Arab propaganda activities which have assumed not only an anti-Israel but an anti-Jewish cast. Premier Golda Meir is expected to participate in the discussion of world Jewry and its relationship to Israel.

Previously, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Jewish Congress, told Israeli editors that large-scale emigration of Russian Jews to Israel might be the most important and most desirable solution. But he said, of immediate importance were demands that Soviet Jews be given the right to freedom of religion, freedom of education and freedom to practice their own culture. Dr. Goldmann said he feared that Jewish youth had no common language with the Jewish establishment and may be lost to Jewry.

A Fourth Of France Believes Jews Have Too Much Influence There

PARIS, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Nearly one-quarter of the people of France believe that Jews exert "too great an influence" in France, according to a poll conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion. The poll was conducted before the affair of the five gunboats which evaded the French embargo and sailed from Cherbourg for Israel.

Nearly 45 percent of those interviewed in the poll thought that the Jewish influence in France was "normal." But the newspaper, L'Express, which sponsored the poll, remarked that there was an inherent tendency toward anti-Semitism in France that was not confined to any specific element of the population.

Latin-American Jewish Youth Seek Greater Identification With Jews, Israel

CARACAS, Venezuela, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A group of 130 Latin American Jewish students who have never identified themselves with Jewish affairs has indicated here that they still possess a Jewish consciousness and would like to become better, more knowledgeable Jews.

The students, from eight universities in Venezuela and Colombia, participated in a seminar on Jewish problems organized by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation of Venezuela. A survey showed that more than three-quarters of them would not marry a non-Jew and that almost all would like to spend some time in Israel.

The youngsters described themselves as "Jews by inertia." They said they had little knowledge of Jewish religious practices and rarely participated in Jewish programs for social action in their communities. The Argentine-Jewish author, Mario Szichman, one of the speakers at the seminar, characterized Latin American Jewry as part of the "establishment" willing to tolerate even dictatorships so long as it is left in peace.

But according to Rabbi Isidoro Aizenberg, director of the Venezuelan Hillel Foundation, more and more Jewish youth are seeking knowledge of Judaism and identification with it.

The seminar touched on the problems of Jewish identification and involvement in the social revolution in South America. The Venezuelan Hillel Foundation was the first in Latin America, established two years ago. Another was founded recently in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

New York Radio Station To Broadcast Lessons In Conversational Yiddish

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--A radio course in conversational Yiddish will be broadcast four times weekly over Radio Station WEVD in New York, the Workmen's Circle, its sponsor jointly with the station, announced today. The Yiddish lessons will be given nightly, Monday through Thursday at 8:45 PM beginning Jan. 12. The course will be conducted by Wolf and Sylvia Younin. It is believed to be the first such course ever presented by an American radio station.

Services Are Held For Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, 79

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 (JTA)--Funeral services were held today for Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, rabbi-emeritus of the West Side Institutional Synagogue. The noted Orthodox leader and scholar died Friday at the age of 79. Rabbi Goldstein had been professor of homiletics at Yeshiva University and had served as president of the Synagogue Council of America and of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. In 1940 he was named State Department observer at the United Nations.

Rabbi Goldstein received his bachelor's and master's degrees at Columbia and his doctorate in divinity at Yeshiva University. He was the author of a number of books on religious themes and was active in the World Academy for Higher Jewish Studies on Jerusalem.