

JTA daily news bulletin

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

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Vol. XXXVII - Fifty-Third Year

Thursday, January 15, 1970

No. 9

Sisco Defends US Middle East Policy At Meeting Of Major Jewish Organizations

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs, explained and defended the United States Government's position in offering proposals for solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a meeting today with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The meeting was held behind closed doors and was entirely off-the-record. The JTA learned that Mr. Sisco spoke for some 90 minutes in his exposition of American policies and procedures in seeking a Mideast solution, and then replied to questions. The initiative for the meeting came from Mr. Sisco and the session was convened at his request.

Conference officials declined to discuss Mr. Sisco's presentation or to offer any reaction to it. Some of the participants said they had been impressed by Mr. Sisco's evident sincerity but stressed they could not comment on his exposition without violating the conditions under which he had spoken.

View Clearest And Most Comprehensive To Date

One participant in the conference told the JTA that Mr. Sisco, in a thoroughly documented presentation, had given his listeners the clearest and most comprehensive exposition of the American policy they had ever heard. They were able now, to understand it, this source said, but he stressed that this did not mean that they accepted Mr. Sisco's reasoning and justification of that policy.

It was understood that plans for the convening of a two-day emergency conference of the American Jewish leadership to be held in Washington on January 25-26 were not affected by today's meeting. The Washington conference being organized by the presidents' conference will be attended by Jewish community leaders from all parts of the country. Present plans indicate that it will be the largest and most representative gathering of American Jewish leadership since the emergency meeting during the Six-Day War in 1967. The fact that Mr. Sisco sought the occasion to present the Administration view once again to American Jewry and to seek to allay fears widely expressed by the American Jewish community that the Administration was weakening dangerously in its support of Israel, was taken as evidence of the effect the massive American Jewish protest has had in Washington.

New Proposals Aim At Closing British-Soviet Gap On Arab-Israeli Settlement

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. Jan. 14 (JTA)--New British proposals aimed at bridging the gulf between the Soviet and British positions on the conditions of an Arab-Israeli settlement were reported today to be in preparation following a four-hour meeting Tuesday of the United Nations representatives of the Four Powers. Meanwhile, the envoy's deputies were to meet again this week to try once again to put into written form a statement of the areas of agreement, areas of potential agreement and areas of complete disagreement after some 25 Four Power meetings. A session of the deputies last week failed to produce the statement.

The Washington Post reported that prior to Tuesday's meeting, "the United States was authoritatively said to be intending to make clear to the Soviet Union that no further concessions can be expected and that the next move on a settlement is up to Moscow." The paper reported that the British did not regard the Soviet reply of Dec. 23, rejecting the American proposals for an Israeli-Egyptian settlement "as representing Moscow's entire position." Consequently, it said the British believed that there were areas for compromise and were making proposals to that effect.

Ambassador Armand Berard of France told Tuesday's meeting that agreement had been reached on several key points. He listed several in his talk with the envoys but sources said later that the "agreement" attained on many of the issues he cited was, at the least, highly debatable.

Berard's Initiative Seen As Move To Squash Opposition At Home

Ambassador Berard's initiative in offering his "balance-sheet" was ascribed by the New York Times to the intention "to help the French Government squash opposition at home and abroad to its decision to supply Libya with Mirage fighter planes." The \$400 million arms deal which France has just negotiated with Libya has aroused considerable criticism in France and expression of fears in Israel and elsewhere that a good part of the equipment which Libya will receive from France will ultimately find its way into Egyptian hands.

The presentation of the "balance sheet," the New York Times said, was regarded by experts as "a bit of diplomatic forcing designed to move the talks off dead center by stressing the positive aspects." The paper noted that "the French in effect are asking the other three powers to confirm that the talks have been positive."

In an editorial today, the Times said Soviet Russia's blunt rejection of the latest U.S. proposals for a Mideast settlement "seems designed to appease the most intransigent Arabs, as though dictated in Cairo." Nevertheless, the Times believes the Soviets have kept the door open to further

talks and acknowledge that "urgent steps" are needed to establish peace in the area. "Such steps will not be possible until the Soviet Union musters the courage to confront its Arab clients with clear call for reasonable and necessary concessions comparable to those the United States has honorably proposed to its friends in Israel," the Times said.

Israeli Soldier Wounded Near Suez Canal And Israeli Civilian Wounded Near Hebron

TEL AVIV, Jan. 14 (JTA)--An Israeli soldier was injured in an exchange of mortar fire with Egyptian forces in the southern sector of the Suez Canal zone. An Israeli civilian was injured near Hebron when an Israeli vehicle was fired on. Security authorities are investigating the incident. An Israeli Arab farmer was machine gunned to death today when his car was ambushed near Kahn Yunis in the Gaza Strip. The victim was identified as Yusuf Abu Dakka, 50, who left Gaza in 1948 but returned after the Israeli occupation in 1967. His death was said to be the fourth assassination in as many days of Arabs suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Rep. Podell Going To Paris To Discuss Arms Supply To Arab States By French

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14 (JTA)--Rep. Bertram L. Podell, New York Democrat, will leave for Paris Thursday to discuss with French Government officials "the massive supply of arms to the Arab states" by France. Rep. Podell told the JTA that arrangements had been made for him to meet with French officials on a ministerial level to discuss the controversial issue prior to the visit to Washington next month of President Georges Pompidou of France. Rep. Podell may be joined in Paris by two of his congressional associates who share his concern over French supply of arms to the Arab states while France continues to embargo arms shipments to Israel including the 50 Mirage supersonic jets which Israel has already paid for.

Meanwhile, the French Defense Ministry, which has vehemently denied that it was negotiating the sale of supersonic Mirage jets to Iraq, actually demonstrated the aircraft to a visiting Iraqi military mission last month, informed sources said today. According to the sources, the Iraqi mission, headed by a general, was shown the super-secret F-1 model, the latest version of the Mirage, at a fighter-bomber base at Istres. The planes were flight demonstrated by crack French Air Force pilots, the sources said. The F-1 is a high performance, all weather plane which Israel was interested in before then President Charles de Gaulle imposed his embargo in June, 1967.

Abba Eban Levels Sharpest Attack On France Ever Made By Israeli Official

JERUSALEM, Jan. 14 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Abba Eban in effect accused France today of fraud and implied that promises made by the French Government were worthless. Speaking in reply to agenda motions in the Knesset, Mr. Eban leveled the sharpest attack ever made against France by a member of the Israel Government. He referred to the arms deal which includes the sale of 50 Mirage jets to Libya. Mr. Eban said that as recently as last month, a high ranking French official assured Israeli representatives that an arms deal with Libya might never be concluded. He charged that the French Government had been calculatingly misleading the world, including Israel, about its real intentions. It conducted "camouflage maneuvers" to "conceal the truth and all the while was putting the final touches to a large scale arms agreement with an Arab country that had declared itself part of the struggle against Israel," Mr. Eban said.

He disclosed that France had promised Israel several times that its 50 embargoed Mirage jets would not be released to any Arab state, near or far, if Israel renounced its claims to them. But now France is selling 50 of the same model Mirage to Libya. Mr. Eban said that all efforts to get the French embargo relaxed had proved fruitless. (France's denial, that it was negotiating a new arms deal with Iraq was greeted with skepticism by the French public, Washington Post correspondent Jonathan Randal reported from Paris today. He said the skepticism stemmed from "the French Government's devious tactics in the Libyan deal.")

AJCommittee Urges US Not To Be Swayed By Soviet Rejection Of American Proposals

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--The American Jewish Committee urged the United States Government Tuesday night to "make clear that the repeated Soviet rejection of American proposals for settlement of the Middle East conflict will not prompt this country to present new proposals yielding to Arab and Soviet demands," according to Philip Hoffman, AJCommittee president.

Pointing out that the United States had presented a series of proposals to the recent two-power and four-power talks on the Middle East, and that each of these proposals had been rejected by the Soviet Union, the AJCommittee declared that these proposals, together with recent statements by Secretary of State William P. Rogers, "may well lead the Arabs to believe that if they remain intransigent, the great powers will eventually impose a settlement on Israel without requiring the Arab states to make a genuine peace." "American aid to Israel becomes all the more urgent," the committee said, "in the light of the announcement that France has agreed to supply large quantities of Mirage jets and tanks to Libya and substantial quantities of arms to Iraq -- two states militantly hostile to Israel -- while continuing its embargo on arms shipments to Israel."

Israelis Volunteer For Relief Mission To Biafra In Response To Government Appeal

JERUSALEM, Jan. 14 (JTA)--The Foreign Ministry reported today that 350 Israelis have volunteered for relief missions to Biafra. But it has stopped registering new applicants because it is uncertain when international volunteers will be admitted to the area. The Israeli Foreign Ministry has been in touch with the International Red Cross which is negotiating with Nigerian authorities for permission to enter the stricken area. Israel dispatched a shipment of food and medical supplies to Biafra yesterday for distribution by the Red Cross.

Czechoslovak Communist Party Mounting Campaign Against Jews And Alleged Zionists

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--The Czechoslovak Communist Party is mounting a campaign against Jews and alleged "Zionists." Its apparent purpose is to link Jewish intellectuals with the regime of ousted Party chief Alexander Dubcek and his liberal reform drive of 1968, New York Times correspondent Paul Hoffmann reported from Vienna today.

Mr. Hoffmann wrote that according to "reliable private information" Czech Jews see in these developments an upsurge of anti-Semitism in the Communist Party apparatus and an effort to purge Jewish influence from Czech society. In recent weeks articles in the Party press and broadcasts over the state-owned radio have alleged that Jewish supporters of Dubcek were part of an "international Zionist conspiracy" intended to remove Czechoslovakia from the Communist camp. Mr. Hoffmann said that the charges appear to have stemmed from a secret document on the alleged role of Jews in the Dubcek reforms which was compiled by the secret police with the assistance of Soviet security officers.

"Jews are known to be the prime targets in purges that are being carried out in the party and its affiliated organizations," Mr. Hoffmann reported. "Some Jewish students and young intellectuals have recently been banned from Prague as 'parasites' together with persons suspected of living by racketeering and other unlawful activities. The alleged 'parasites' who were removed from the capital must establish a fixed residence in some rural community and under police surveillance," Mr. Hoffmann wrote. He said Czech workers frequently denounce Jews at Party meetings and the "Zionist" label has been applied even to liberals who are not Jewish. Mr. Hoffmann said that according to the latest official data published last April, only 14,000 Jews remain in Czechoslovakia, 9,000 of them in Slovakia where anti-Semitism is apparently less strongly felt than in Bohemia-Moravia.

Lebanese Representatives Use Visit Of Patriarch As Pretext To Assail Israel

MEXICO CITY, Jan. 14 (JTA)- Msgr. George Hakim formerly of Haifa, Greek Catholic Patriarch for the Orient and a former member of Histadrut in Israel, visited this city and took time out to confer with leaders of the Mexican Church about the situation of Christians in Israel and the Arab countries. He refrained from attacking the Israeli government and did not mention the Middle East conflict. But representatives from Lebanon used his visit as a pretext for attacking Israel. The Israeli embassy here countered the attack by citing the Patriarch's loyalty and charged that the Lebanese were using his name for intrigues against Israel. On January 6, however, Msgr. Hakim was quoted as branding Israel as a "thief" and an "aggressor" during an interview with newsmen in Caracas after protesting to them that he was a "non-political" person and should not be asked "political questions."

Brandeis U Receives \$1 Million From Ford Foundation For Development Purposes

WALTHAM, Mass. Jan. 14 (JTA)--The Ford Foundation has granted \$1 million for development purposes to Brandeis University, the only Jewish-sponsored non-sectarian university in the United States. The grant was announced today by Brandeis president, Morris B. Abram. Nathan Perlmutter, vice president for development at Brandeis, described it as "seed money" for staff expansion that will help Brandeis establish more effective patterns for raising funds among alumni and the American Jewish community at large.

He said that "While Brandeis University has rapidly and firmly taken its place among the premier colleges and universities of America, the hard fund-raising reality is that we have only 6,000 alumni, half of whom are not yet thirty years old. So it is that the Ford Foundation grant enabling us to reach our 'foster alumni' -- the American Jewish community -- is a creative and timely assist." The University noted that its support potential in the Jewish community has been barely tapped. Out of a total American-Jewish population of nearly six million, only 45,000 persons have ever contributed to it and of that number, only 25,000 have given \$100 or more, the University disclosed. Of the more populous states, only in Massachusetts have more than two percent of the Jewish population made donations to Brandeis.

Rabbi Says Orthodox Jews Overwhelmed By New York Gravediggers Strike

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--The Rabbinical Council of America today sent letters of protest to striking gravediggers, cemeteries, Mayor John V. Lindsay and Governor Nelson Rockefeller, in an effort to make known the "sense of discomfiture" Orthodox Jews have about the strike here.

Rabbi Abraham Besdin, Associate Director of Rabbis for the Rabbinical Council, said that the impact of the strike on Orthodox Jews was "overwhelming." The crucial problems for the Orthodox he said, include the delay in burial, which under Orthodox law is supposed to take place within 24 hours after death; the fact that the bodies are being put in vaults and embalmed, which also runs counter to Orthodox tenets; and the delay in Shiva, the period of mourning for the bereaved family. The rabbi called this latter delay painful beyond words. He said that there was no way of reliably estimating the number of bodies awaiting burial.

Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, head of the New York Board of Rabbis, said that his group would support the right of families to bury their own dead. "Nobody on strike can deny people their basic rights," he said. He added that he took this stand despite his general position against crossing a picket line. He said that his group took no stand on the strike except insofar as it affected religious principles.

Rabbi Besdin compared the strike to the strike of transit workers here in 1966. "That was humanly unbearable," he said. "This is religiously unbearable."

Russian Yiddish Poet Appeals For Help To Yiddish Folk Singer To Emigrate To Israel

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--A Russian Yiddish poet, whose applications for permission to emigrate to Israel were repeatedly rejected by Soviet authorities, has appealed for help to a Yiddish folk singer who had better luck when she decided to leave Russia. The singer, Nehama Lifshitz, made public a letter she received from her friend, Iosif B. Kerler, through the American Jewish Committee. It was released today in the New York Times.

Mr. Kerler, 52, was wounded while serving in the Red Army during World War II. He wrote, "I am a Yiddish poet and as such I am utterly superfluous in the Soviet Union. Surely no one can any longer deny that because of certain historical developments, there is absolutely no future for Yiddish culture here." He wrote to Miss Lifshitz that in December, 1965 he had received an emigration permit for himself, his ailing wife Anya and their son to join Mrs. Kerler's sister in Israel, but it was revoked without explanation a month later. He said that two subsequent petitions were denied, again without explanation. He appealed to the singer, "All we ask, dearest Nehema, is that you help us knock on all the doors. Perhaps through you our pain, our cry of woe, will reach the highest Soviet authorities."

Miss Lifshitz was permitted to leave Russia for Israel a year ago. She has become an Israeli citizen and has just completed a concert tour of the United States. Many of her songs contain lyrics written by Mr. Kerler who was born in the Ukraine in 1918 and published his first collection of poems, "For My Land," in 1944.

Charges Dropped After Release From Prison

In 1948, Kerler was arrested in the wave of persecution of Yiddish culture which culminated in the 1952 purge of Jewish intellectuals by Stalin. He was released in 1954 and all charges against him were dismissed. In 1959, his collection was re-issued in Russian translation together with another volume, "The Vineyard of my Father." His poems have appeared in the Soviet periodical "Yiddish Heimland," in the Warsaw Yiddish newspaper "Folkstimme" and in the leftist Yiddish newspaper, "Freiheit," in New York. His latest book was published in 1965. But he wrote to Miss Lifshitz that he hasn't published a line in the last four years.

"Without Yiddish educational and cultural institutions, without a press, a theater and above all, without a mass Yiddish readership - what is there for a Yiddish writer to do here?" he said in his letter. "It is only natural that a Yiddish poet should want to live where his people, his culture, his language, are firmly established." Mr. Kerler included a poem in his letter which indicated that he bears no malice toward Soviet Russia. In it he said: "Dear land where I was cradled, farewell. I leave you now...I go with heavy heart, with leaden steps. With each step I tear away pieces of earth soaked with my blood. I wrench my eye away. I wrench my heart away. And wish you: Let all be well."

Senator Protests Chase Manhattan Israel Policy; Wants NYC To Withdraw Its Funds

NEW YORK, Jan. 14 (JTA)--State Sen. Albert B. Lewis of Brooklyn wants the city to withdraw all funds they have on deposit with Chase Manhattan Bank because "the state of Israel has no friend at Chase Manhattan." Lewis, a Democrat, said the funds should be withdrawn "because of the pro-Arab position of Chase Manhattan's president, David Rockefeller, who is misusing the bank's power to undermine this nation's support for Israel." Much of that power, Lewis asserted, "comes from funds on deposit from the city and state governments."

The lawmaker's view was expressed in letters sent to City Controller Abraham Beame and State Controller Arthur Levitt. In a letter to Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Lewis urged him to use his influence "with the Nixon Administration to alter the administration's obvious shift to a pro-Arab policy." Lewis added that "if Gov. Rockefeller, who himself has enormous oil interests throughout the world remains silent on this critical issue, his silence should be interpreted as support of his brother David and the Arab nations."

Lewis' request follows that of the Tensor Corporation which last week announced it was withdrawing its account from the bank in protest against a "dollar diplomacy based on oil interest," and called on other depositors to join in this protest. The Tensor Company's statement, signed by the firm's president, Jay Monroe, appeared as an "open letter to the American public" in the New York Times January 8.

Bank Spokesman Says Rockefeller Misunderstood

Beame told the JTA today he had not yet seen Lewis' letter and would have no comment until he studied its contents. A spokesman for the bank said he felt both the Tensor statement and that by Lewis appeared to be based on a misreading of David Rockefeller's position on the Middle East. He said Rockefeller's view, as expressed in a statement to the press last week, was that the U. S. must do all it can to safeguard the security and sovereign existence of Israel, and that a compromise was necessary on the part of both Israel and the Arab states to achieve peace.

The bank spokesman said "some" depositors had called the bank after the Tensor statement appeared "but when we clarified Mr. Rockefeller's views to them they were satisfied. We've had no run on bank deposits being withdrawn." As an afterthought, he added: "The Israel Bond Organization uses the bank as its fiscal agent."