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Israel Concerned Over Nixon's Silence On More Arms; Rogers' Role Emerges

JERUSALEM, March 11 (JTA)--The Israeli Cabinet met in special session today to consider President Richard M. Nixon's unexplained delay in announcing his decision on Israel's request to purchase more American Phantom and Skyhawk jets. The delay was viewed with "misgivings" according to diplomatic sources here. But the Foreign Ministry categorically denied reports today that Israel's Ambassador in Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, was being called home for urgent consultations. President Nixon said at a press conference on Jan. 30 that the United States would supply arms to friendly governments, like Israel's, for defense. He said a decision on the Phantoms would be made within 30 days. Dr. William Wexler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and national president of B'nai B'rith, told newsmen at Lydda Airport that the delay in President Nixon's announcement should not cause any anxiety here. "The U.S. is a true friend of Israel and will see that Israel maintains military superiority," he said. Dr. Wexler arrived here for the B'nai B'rith conference which opens in Jerusalem Sunday.

(Secretary of State William P. Rogers has emerged as the chief proponent of delay on the presidential decision to meet Israel's request for additional Phantom and Skyhawk jets, it was learned today. President Nixon's deferment of a decision on the Israeli request was described as in large part due to the State Department's objections to an affirmative action at this time. The Department, and Mr. Rogers were described as influenced in no small part by Soviet intimations that the Soviet Union was holding up further arms shipments to Egypt with the implied threat that the shipments would be renewed if the United States announced it would send more planes to Israel.

The State Department also wants to use the possibility of selling the planes to Israel as a lever to ensure Israel's compliance with strong U.S. urgings for restraint in dealing with Lebanon and the terrorist bases on Lebanese soil. The Department of Defense and the military and intelligence agencies were reported to be in favor of meeting the Israeli requests for planes and the White House is being subjected to strong pressure from Congress where many members are actively pressing for aid to Israel.)

Law Of Return Amendment Adopted By 51-14 Vote; Passage Stirs Stormy Debate

JERUSALEM, March 11 (JTA)--A Government-sponsored amendment to the Law of Return which defines a Jew according to halacha--religious law--was passed by a vote of 51-14 in the Knesset last night after a stormy debate. The chamber was thrown into an uproar at one point when an Orthodox rabbi MK spat on a Reform prayerbook and threw it to the floor. The amendment mainly affects the national status of non-Jewish spouses of immigrants. It denies Jewish nationality to all but persons born of Jewish mothers or converted to Judaism. But it grants non-Jewish spouses, their children and grandchildren all rights and privileges of immigrants including automatic citizenship.

Those provisions were regarded as too liberal by the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel which voted against the amendment. The Orthodox also objected to the amendment's failure to specify that only conversions by Orthodox rabbis would be recognized. This, in effect, permits the granting of Jewish nationality to persons converted abroad by Reform or Conservative rabbis which the Orthodox establishment in Israel refuses to recognize. It was on this point that Rabbi Menachem Porush of the Agudat Israel delivered a bitter harangue in which he assailed Reform Judaism as "anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish and anti-God." He whipped out a Reform prayer book which he apparently had on his person, spat on a page and threw the book to the floor.

Immediately after, Minister of Justice Yaacov Shimshon Shapiro mounted the Knesset rostrum and denounced the act as scandalous. Mr. Shapiro declared, "This is a prayer book used by hundreds of thousands of Jews. I would not protest any differently were it a Christian, Moslem, Budhist or any other prayerbook." The Justice Minister then moved that a committee of the house consider disciplinary action against Rabbi Porush. At that point the Orthodox MK apologized saying that he had lost his temper. He asked that his apology be regarded as closing the incident. The controversial amendment was backed by the Government and the majority Labor Alignment.

Israel Building Fortifications Along Lebanon Border To Thwart Guerrilla Terror

TEL AVIV, March 11 (JTA)--A high ranking Israeli Army officer told newsmen yesterday that his country's response to guerrilla infiltration across the Lebanese border was being held in abeyance while fortifications and other security arrangements were being made at Israeli border settlements. He said the protective measures would give Israeli forces greater freedom to maneuver and would provide time for Lebanese authorities to curb the guerrillas. The officer said that recent military forays into Lebanon were only "token" responses to guerrilla assaults on Israeli settlements. He indicated that Israel could easily take far stronger measures that would force Lebanese civilians to evacuate the border areas turning them into a "no-man's land" such as exists on the Jordanian side of the cease-fire lines. "We want to protect our settlements so we're not nervous and don't take measures we will regret" the officer told newsmen touring the border region.

There were no official indications here that the apparent cooling of Israeli response along the Lebanese frontier stemmed from Big Power warnings to Israel not to take military action against Lebanon. The Government officially denied that such warnings had been received although press reports abroad said they were conveyed to Israel by France and the Soviet Union. The French Ambassador, Francis Hure, met with Foreign Minister Abba Eban yesterday. Official sources said that he had merely asked Israel to do all that it could to prevent an escalation of fighting along the Lebanese border. (Israel complained to the United Nations Security Council yesterday that since the last Israeli protest, Lebanon "has not taken the necessary measures to terminate the violations of the cease-fire." The complaint was contained in a letter from the Israeli representative, Ambassador Yosef Tekoah, to Dr. Joaquin Vallejo Arbelaez, this month's President of the Security Council. The letter said, "The Lebanese Government's attitude to these grave developments is reflected in repeated announcements by its leaders that warfare against Israel will continue and in the policy of disregarding the cease-fire.")

Grenade Thrown By Terrorist Injures 22 Gaza Strip Arabs On Way To Work In Israel

TEL AVIV, March 11 (JTA)--Twenty-two Gaza Strip Arabs were injured when a grenade exploded in the middle of a crowd waiting for busses to take them to jobs in Israel today. Most of the injured were hospitalized as security forces searched the area for the grenade throwers. Israeli officials acknowledged that the attack was the most serious so far against Arab civilians. It was the first time terrorists threw a grenade into a large crowd. Up to now they have attacked busses carrying workers to and from Israel in an effort to prevent Arabs from accepting work there. Employment in Israel however is one of the mainstays of Gaza's depressed economy.

An Israeli patrol was attacked near Beth Joseph in the Beisan area this morning. They returned the fire and sustained no casualties. A suspect was shot to death today after a grenade injured two Israeli citizens in a car near Khan Yunis in the northern Gaza Strip. The suspect was running from the scene and was shot when he failed to obey an order to halt. Two Lebanese villagers captured by Israeli forces last week were returned to Lebanon today. They were held for questioning following an Israeli raid on the Lebanese border village of Ait A Shaab.

Six Saboteurs From Jordan Sentenced To 10-20 Years In Prison

TEL AVIV, March 11 (JTA)--Six saboteurs from Jordan were sentenced to prison terms of 10-20 years by a Ramallah military tribunal today after they were found guilty of armed infiltration into Israel-held territory. The saboteurs said they belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. During their trial they said that rival terrorist organizations based in Jordan were competing for recruits. They said each group was trying to outbid the other for new members.

Reform Rabbis Pledge Solidarity With Israel On Ideological And Practical Levels

JERUSALEM, March 11 (JTA)--The Central Conference of American Rabbis, the rabbinic arm of Reform Judaism, ended its 81st annual convention and its first to be held in Israel here last night with expressions of solidarity with Israel on both ideological and practical levels. Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, president of the CCAR, and Rabbi David Polish, vice president, declared that holding the convention in Israel represented a "turning point of immeasurable impact" for the Reform movement. Premier Golda Meir arrived at the convention soon after an uproar erupted in the Knesset when a member of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel spat on a Reform prayer book and threw it to the floor. Mrs. Meir gave the impression of not being fully aware of what had transpired in the chamber and mentioned it only in passing. She appealed to the Reform rabbis for patience over the status of Reform Judaism in Israel. Mrs. Meir told them, "For me, the unity of the Jewish people precedes everybody and everything else and I am willing to make this compromise for its sake."

Mrs. Meir also sought to convince the Reform rabbis that progress was being made in easing Orthodox rigidity. Referring to the amendment to the Law of Return just passed by the Knesset she said that only a short time ago they too would have considered impossible the passage of a measure which recognizes non-Orthodox conversions abroad. The Reform rabbis appeared to take the spitting incident with equanimity. They also accepted with good-natured tolerance a bitter attack on their movement by an Orthodox Israeli scholar, Rabbi Adin Steinsalz, editor of a new edition of the Talmud. He contended that Reform Judaism "contains all the vices of Christianity without its virtues." A Conservative rabbi invited to speak at the convention, Jack Cohen of the Hebrew University's B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, contended that religion permeates life in Israel though it is not centered on the synagogue alone.

Tunisia's Foreign Minister Denounces Terrorist Attacks On Civilian Airlines

BONN, March 11 (JTA)--The Foreign Minister of Tunisia today strongly denounced terrorist attacks on civilian aircraft which, he said, did not serve the Arab cause. Habib Bourguiba Jr., who is visiting West Germany, also indicated a relatively moderate attitude toward Israel. Replying to questions at a press conference, he predicted that Israel one day will have to negotiate with El Fatah, the Palestinian guerrilla group. "From our own experience, we were once called agitators, bandits and terrorists and we are now partners in negotiations," the Tunisian diplomat said with reference to his own country's struggle for independence from France. "El Fatah could one day be acceptable as a partner," he added.

Asked if he favored the dissolution of the State of Israel, Mr. Bourguiba said Israel had to find a formula for coexistance and dialogue with the Arabs. Questioned about France's sale of Mirage jets to Libya, he replied that it was a matter between those two countries alone and hoped it would be applied to peaceful aims.

39 Soviet Jews Proclaim Right To Remain Jews And To Emigrate To Israel

LONDON, March 11 (JTA)--A statement proclaiming their "right to remain Jews, to educate our children in the spirit of Jewish culture" and to emigrate to Israel was made public in Moscow yesterday by a group of 39 Jewish residents of the Soviet capital. The statement also denounced the Soviet Union's bitter anti-Israel campaign and criticized Jews who have achieved promience in Soviet life but have not "preserved their spiritual links with Jewish national culture." The signers of the statement were mostly professionals, physicians and engineers. A few listed their occupations as housewives or workers. Unlike the Jews who signed anti-Israel declarations, none are public figures. What Western observers considered most daring was their denunciation of Soviet Middle East policy.

"The military events in the Middle East have once more been used to make anti-Israel propaganda," the statement said. "This is a shameful propagandistic thrust, for the war is a great disaster and if Arabs too, are perishing in this war, it does not make Jews any happier." The 39 noted that "the emotional heat of anti-Israeli propaganda is now very great" and said it was a "myth" to describe Israel as "reactionary and imperialist." The statement, titled "Open Proclamation" was sent several days ago to Leonid M. Zamyatin, head of the Foreign Ministry's press department. The signatories declared that they were ready to emigrate to Israel on foot if necessary and asked for permission "to appear at a news conference before Soviet and foreign journalists and make a declaration." The statement was made available by members of the group to Western newsmen yesterday.

It was clearly the most daring and defiant challenge to the official Soviet Government attitude toward Israel and its own Jewish citizens ever made publicly by Jews in the USSR. The statement was aimed directly against the Kremlin's current campaign of denunciation of Israel and Zionism in which scores of prominent Soviet Jews have been enlisted. It criticized as "one-sided" a press conference held in Moscow a week ago, under Mr. Zamyatin's chairmanship, at which leading Jewish academicians, artists, writers, scientists and military officers branded Israel an aggressor and proclaimed the Soviet Union as the only "motherland" of Russian Jewry. It said that those who appeared at the press conference and other Jews who signed anti-Israel declarations in recent weeks did not represent the views of all Soviet Jews but "only a certain, if numerous, part of Soviet Jewry."

According to the signatories, 80,000 families have applied for emigration to Israel since 1968 when Soviet authorities began accepting applications after the June, 1967 Arab-Israel War. They said that all but a very few of the applications were rejected. The statement acknowledged that "Every Jew has, of course, the right to any degree of assimilation. We however, do not want to forfeit our national identity and our spiritual link with our people." The statement specifically mentioned that there were no Yiddish language schools in the Soviet Union and that Jews lacked the educational facilities in their native tongue possessed by most other ethnic minorities in the USSR.

Dr. Jarring Meets With U Thant; Will Also Meet With Big Four Representatives

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. March 11 (JTA)--Dr. Gunnar Jarring, special representative of United Nations Secretary General U Thant to the Middle East was scheduled to meet with Mr. Thant early this afternoon. But a UN spokesman said Dr. Jarring had declined to meet with newsmen to discuss the reason or implication of his return here. He will, however, meet with representatives of the Big Four and "other interested parties," during his stay in New York. The spokesman added that Dr. Jarring did not wish to release a schedule of his meetings. There was no immediate word about the nature of the discussion between Dr. Jarring and Mr. Thant. UN Undersecretary Dr. Ralphe J. Bunche said yesterday that Dr. Jarring's return from Moscow was not in the nature of an "emergency," but was "routine." It had been suggested to Dr. Jarring by Mr. Thant that he return for a series of talks on the Mideast crisis.

Jewish Community Leaders To Map Plans For Community Needs In U.S. And Israel

NEW YORK, March 11 (JTA)--A number of the major priorities in American Jewish communal commitments--at home, in Israel, and abroad--will be discussed at the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds' national board and committee meetings beginning tomorrow through Monday at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The subject which the 200 Federation officers and executives from across the country will discuss and recommend community and CJWF action on will include: Special financing for the needs of the United Israel Appeal to help deal with Israel's hard-pressed immigration and absorption programs; the implementation of the Council's Task Force on Jewish identity to strengthen Jewish commitment among young adults in the communities and on college campuses; and recruitment and training of professionals for Jewish communal service.

Expo '70 Officials Urged Not To Bow To Arab Pressure And Let Israelis Participate

NEW YORK, March 11 (JTA)--The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations today called upon the Japanese government and Expo '70 authorities to intervene in an Arab-instigated withdrawal of an invitation to Israel to participate in the fair's opening ceremonies on Sunday. Arnold Forster, chairman of the Conference's Technical Subcommittee, and general counsel of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said Israel had an invitation to send an honorary police delegation to the grand opening of the fair, which was extended by the Asahi Broadcasting Corporation, but has been withdrawn due to Arab pressure. Noting that the theme for Expo '70 is "progress and harmony for mankind," the Presidents Conference said that "to succumb to Arab threats and intimidation is to go against the spirit and meaning of Expo." The Conference said that its members, who have been planning to attend Expo '70 as individuals and in groups, have voiced their consternation at the discriminatory treatment of Israel.

Survival Of Judaism In The U.S. Threatened By Increased Intermarriage

NEW YORK, March 11 (JTA)--The survival of Judaism in the United States is threatened by an increase in intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, according to Dr. Marshall Sklare, sociologist and author. In an article in the March issue of Commentary magazine, published by the American Jewish Committee, Dr. Sklare cites a 1965 study estimating one out of five marriages in Boston as inter-religious, and declared that "one can safely assume that the figure is now approaching one in four." He observed that, "If this is true in so conservative a city as Boston, it must mean that inter-marriage has reached large-scale proportions throughout the country as a whole."

Among upper and middle-class American Jews, Dr. Sklare commented, the feeling is that "intermarriage is the inevitable wave of the future," and "the most highly acculturated elements of American Jewry are now engaged in accomodating to it." "To put the case baldly," Dr. Sklare said, "there is no surplus Jewish population to cushion the impact of mixed marriage." The results of "accomodation," Dr. Sklare said, "are too momentous to remain a matter of mere 'sectarian' interest, of concern only to Reform Jews or to individuals contemplating inter-marriage. The Jewish community as a whole is soon bound to find itself embroiled in a bitter debate over what this new development portends for its survival as a distinctive group."

NCCJ Working To Bridge Gap Between Jews And Christians In Aftermath Of Six-Day War

NEW YORK, March 11 (JTA)--Christian-Jewish relations in the United States have been placed under a "severe strain by the Six-Day War of 1967 and its aftermath," leading to "what may well be a new era of crisis" in intergroup relations, the National Conference of Christians and Jews said today. As part of an "intensive effort" to bridge these gaps "with understanding," NCCJ president Dr. Sterling W. Brown announced the publication of several booklets geared to "lift the blanket of practical problems that concern American religious people--the Arab-Israeli War, intermarriage, birth control, Vietnam, black-white polarization, and such church-state controversies as teaching religion in the public school or giving state aid to non-public schools." The first booklet asserts that Judaism and Christianity are closely related parts. "Because of their common roots and intertwined histories, Christianity cannot fully understand itself without Judaism, nor can Judaism fully understand itself without taking account of the stream which has flowed forth from it."

Ottinger Asserts The U.S. Is Training Nearly 600 Arab Officers But No Israelis

NEW YORK, March 11 (JTA)--Rep. Richard L. Ottinger of New York, a United States Senate candidate, charged yesterday that this year "the United States is training nearly 600 Arab officers at a cost of two million dollars," and that this "insidious" policy is "a clear example of the (Nixon) Administration's Arab strategy - a strategy which gives higher priority to U.S. oil interests than to our moral commitment to Israel." Speaking at a press conference at Chase Manhattan Plaza, he noted that "Not a single Israeli officer is receiving that training" this year, and added that over the past decade, the U.S. "gave more than a billion dollars' worth of arms, materiel and training to Arab nations," while "our military aid to Israel totalled well under one hundred million, and Israel paid for all of that." Mr. Ottinger named, as Arab recipients of U.S. aid in the 1960s, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

(A spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington told the JTA that the Congressman's allegation was not new and, considering the reference to Iran, which has diplomatic relations with Israel, not particularly shocking in light of consistent American aid to Arab nations over the past 20 years. He stated that in the last decade U.S. military aid to Arabs has gone only to "pro-Western" Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait, and pointed out that the U.S. has not had relations with Syria for several years. The Embassy spokesman added, Israeli pilots received American training at the time of the 1968 Phantom jet sale.)

Rabbis Ask Pres. Nixon To Restate U.S. Position In Support Of Israel

PHILADELPHIA, March 11 (JTA)--The Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia asked today Pennsylvania's senators and congressmen from the Philadelphia area to join it in obtaining from the White House a "restatement" of the American position in support of Israel. The Board sought their support in a request it made last week to President Nixon to clarify the apology he made to President Pompidou of France for the pro-Israel demonstrations during the course of M. Pompidou's visit to the United States. The letter, signed by Rabbi Elias Cherry, president of the Board, defended the demonstrations as an expression of American opinion and declared that "in view of the fact that the apology by the President of the United States to the President of France may be misunderstood as having implications detrimental to Israel, we should welcome from your Administration a restatement of the traditional American policy toward Israel." Rabbi Cherry declared that "justice would require that such a statement would attract the same attention from the press as did your unprecedented flight to New York to assuage M. Pompidou's ruffled feelings."

Jewish Weekly Demands Apology From Newspaper For Editorial On Loyalty Of U.S. Jews

DETROIT, March 11 (JTA)--A local Jewish weekly has demanded an apology to the Jewish community from the Detroit Free Press for allegedly impugning the loyalty of American Jews. The Detroit Jewish News accused the Free Press of action "tantamount to the terror that emanates from Arab countries, with the support of the Kremlin" because it criticized Jewish demonstrators against French President Georges Pompidou.