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GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE OPENING IN RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC MOOD

By Edwin Eytan, JTA European Bureau Chief

GENEVA, Dec. 20 (JTA)--The Geneva peace conference which is due to open formally tomorrow morning at 10:30 is already in full swing. By this evening all the five participating foreign ministers and the United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim arrived to attend the Arab-Israeli peace talks. Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who landed in Geneva this morning aboard a special El Al flight, said that "Israel had come to seek peace with honor and to offer peace with honor to our neighbors."

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko who arrived here yesterday afternoon appealed to all participants to "Show a sense of realism and good will" while the Egyptian Minister, Ismail Fahmi, who also arrived yesterday, said that his country seeks "a durable peace." In spite of Fahmi's warning that Egypt will seek "total Israeli withdrawal" from the occupied Arab territories and press for "the restoration of the Palestinian national rights," the conference is opening in a relatively optimistic mood. United Nations officials and participating diplomats are still engaged in last minute discussions on the technical details but they all believe that by tomorrow morning, everything will be settled and the conference will be in full swing.

Israeli circles here said that they do not expect Egypt to raise the issue of the disengagement of forces on the Suez Canal during this preliminary phase. They said that this issue could be discussed, however, early next month—even before the conference formally reconvenes. These circles also said that there is no chance whatsoever for the Palestinians to join the talks at a later stage. They said that the Israeli delegation in its role of one of "the founding fathers" of the peace conference feels that it will have the right to oppose their joining. Eban met this evening with Waldheim to iron out the last technical details concerning tomorrow's talks. It is understood, following this meeting, that the conference will have three official languages, English, Russian and French. It will be presided first by Waldheim—tomorrow morning—and then at the following sessions by the two co-chairmen in alphabetic order: Gromyko and U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. The three participating countries will also speak in alphabetic order after the co-sponsors: Egypt, Israel and Jordan.

According to current arrangements, the delegates will meet in the United Nations "Council Chamber" sitting at six tables drawn up to form a hexagonal shape—somewhat like a star. There will be a 15-inch separation between each table—apparently as a concession to the Egyptians—and three rows of three chairs behind each table, enabling each participant to field nine delegates. Experts from all the countries will sit in a circle surrounding the central table. Some 140 newsmen, out of a total of nearly 1500 from all over the world, will be able to watch at least part of the proceedings from the press gallery. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency correspondent will be among them.

Israeli sources here say that Eban is expected to speak at tomorrow's session for 1-1/2 hours. He is expected to stress the importance of the historical moment which the conference represents, review Israel's past relations with the Arab states and describe what these relations should be and could be. He is also expected to stress Israel's security needs and the fact that under no circumstances can the borders of June 1967 be restored as they would be an invitation to renewed war. At the same time he would let it be clearly known that Israel is prepared to discuss "everything" and is prepared to show itself "flexible" in its demands.

From the various declarations made here by Fahmi and Chief Egyptian spokesman Tahsin Bachtir, the Egyptians' probable stand has become known. The two, briefed Egyptian newsmen attending the conference last night and this morning, they made it clear that they want implementation of the cease-fire which they described as "fragile and incomplete," and to secure the participation of the Syrian and Palestinian delegations at a later phase of the talks, either in Jan., when the conference will resume, or in Feb.

The two made it clear that the Egyptian delegation has set no time limit to the talks and that they are prepared to continue for as long as necessary to arrive at a workable arrangement and "durable" peace. The two also told the Egyptian press that the disengagement of the Third Egyptian Army, surrounded by Israeli forces on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, is not an "urgent matter and will be settled in due time." The Soviet delegates are also leaking out reports indicating that though the Soviet Union still continues "to back the just Arab cause," Gromyko will do his best to press the Arabs to accept "reasonable" compromise solutions. Veteran United Nations officials stress that contrary to other diplomatic confrontations in the past, the results of this consultation will not be measured in increased influence or extra territories but in the clear cut verdict of either war or peace.

MRS. MEIR SAYS ISRAEL REBUFFED NUMEROUS TIMES BY SYRIA ON POW ISSUE

By Gil Sedan, JTA Jerusalem Correspondent

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA)--Premier Golda Meir disclosed last night that Israel made numerous approaches and proposals to the Syrian government in recent weeks to arrange a prisoner of war exchange but was repeatedly rebuffed despite many concessions it offered. She said the proposals included one for a meeting between senior Israeli and Syrian officers similar to the Kilometer 101 talks with the Egyptians. It was conveyed to Damascus through Dr. Roberto Guyer, Undersecretary General of the United Nations, but the Syrians refused, she said. She said there were additional attempts to make contact with the Syrians through representatives of the United States and the International Red Cross but all failed. Mrs. Meir spoke at a special session of the Knesset convened at the government's

request for a final discussion before the Geneva conference which opens tomorrow morning. The Premier's political statement was followed by a lengthy debate which ended with a substantial vote of confidence for the government. (See separate story.)

Mrs. Meir's disclosure of her government's approach to Syria was made at a time when Israelis were increasingly apprehensive over unconfirmed reports that few if any of its soldiers captured by the Syrians were still alive.

Reports POWs in Syria Alive

These reports, from Pentagon sources in Washington, intimated that all of the POWs had been murdered which would account for Syria's persistent refusal to submit a list of POWs to the Red Cross or allow IRC representatives to visit the prisoners.

An Army spokesman said today, however, that according to information in Israeli possession there was no truth to that report. He said that while there is evidence that some POWs were murdered by the Syrians during the war, there was also evidence that others were alive. He noted that some captured Israelis were shown on television and photos of others appeared in newspapers.

According to reports reaching here from Paris today, U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said he had received assurances from President Hafez al-Assad of Syria that Israel POWs were being "well treated." American officials who declined to be identified said Assad asked Kissinger to pass that on to the Israelis. Kissinger gave the information to Israeli officials here Sunday but, according to one source, they were not reassured.

Mrs. Meir disclosed last night that in reply to Syria proposals Israel had agreed to the repatriation of 15,000 Syrian citizens to the areas occupied by Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Israel also offered to pull its troops out of two Syrian strongpoints on Mt. Hermon captured during the war and have them replaced with UN forces. The Syrians insisted, however, that the two positions be returned to them in exchange for Israeli POWs and the approach failed.

The Premier said Israel was sending its authorized representatives to the Geneva peace conference with clear cut directives to make every effort to advance toward and attain peace. She emphasized Israel's opposition to any extended negotiations for the UN Security Council in the Geneva talks. "Any attempt to include the subjects of discussion at the peace conference within the ability and authority of the Security Council will be in dangerous contradiction of the basis and purpose of the conference," she said.

She said that Israel did not ignore "the disturbing fact that one of the powers under whose auspices the conference is meeting has severed diplomatic relations with Israel," a reference to the Soviet Union. "In the course of the conference it will become clear whether their power is actually conducting itself in a manner fitting to the aim of the peace conference," she said. Mrs. Meir also emphasized Israel's opposition to the participation of Palestinian organizations in the Geneva conference.

Despite vociferous objection from the religious parties and Likud, Mrs. Meir said Israel would have to attend the Geneva sessions scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 22. She said Israel

had tried but failed to prevent a session on the Sabbath and could not afford to be absent from it.

KNESSET MAJORITY SUPPORTS ISRAEL'S DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN TALKS

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA)--By a comfortable majority of 50-19, the Knesset last night endorsed the government's policy of participation in the Geneva peace conference. But the debate leading up to the vote of confidence was a stormy one. Knesset Speaker Israel Yeshayahu lost control of the proceedings for a time and near chaos erupted in the chamber.

The vote split along party lines with the Labor Alignment, the Independent Liberals and some left-wing opposition factions voting for the government's policies, and the Likud opposition against them. The National Religious Party, a coalition partner, abstained because the government had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to participate in the Geneva talks on the Sabbath.

The opposition attack was led by Menachem Beigin, leader of Likud's Herut faction. He accused the Labor Alignment of "blood libel" for branding his party the "war party." He claimed that the government had, one-by-one, surrendered all its positions, as regards the auspices of the Geneva conference, the possible participation of Palestinians and other issues so that "Israel's word is no longer taken seriously either in Washington or Moscow." Beigin deplored the government's failure to obtain the release of prisoners of war held by Syria. He assailed its failure to link the resupply of Egypt's Third Army with the Syrian POW issue and demanded that this must be the first issue on the agenda of the Geneva conference.

An uproar broke out when Alignment MK Haim Zedok, chairman of the Knesset foreign affairs and defense committee, challenged Likud to state its position clearly on territorial compromise, particularly on the West Bank. If Likud favored a policy of "don't give up an inch"--and he challenged its members to deny this--then its support of the Geneva conference was merely a bluff and its support for direct negotiations "is just so much eye-wash," he said.

Zedok also said that if Israel had linked the POWs in Egypt to those in Syria "we would have gotten back none at all." He said the government would have preferred the Geneva talks to be held under U.S. rather than UN auspices "but political reality dictated otherwise." He said there was nothing to fear from UN-auspices inasmuch as the UN had not interfered in the Kilometer 101 talks with Egypt. "Our way," said Zedok referring to government policy, "may not guarantee peace but in your way there is a guarantee of no peace."

HOUSE, SENATE ACT ON \$2.2B FOR ISRAEL

By Joseph Polakoff, JTA Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (JTA)--The House of Representatives late today adopted by a 216-149 vote the House-Senate conference bill on foreign aid which includes \$2.2 billion in emergency military assistance to Israel and approximately \$400 million more in grants and credits to Israel for other forms of assistance including resettlement of Soviet Jews in Israel. The Senate, meanwhile, approved by a 66-9 vote the authorization bill essential for the appropriation. The Senate will consider the House-Senate conference report on appropriations possibly tonight or tomorrow. Ten days ago, the House adopted its authorization bill by a vote of 364-82. The Senate vote will complete the foreign aid legislation for President Nixon's signature. A Senate-House conference agreed last

night to put a limitation of \$1.5 billion on the amount of emergency financial assistance President Nixon can grant to Israel. The conference accepted that figure proposed by Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D. Minn.) and adopted by the Senate. The House had put a ceiling of \$1 billion in grant aid. The conference adopted the figure of \$2.2 billion in grants and credits for Israel to meet the costs of re-supply of its military equipment as a result of the Yom Kippur War.

The Senate this afternoon rejected three amendments by Foreign Relations Committee chairman J. William Fulbright to the authorization bill that would have placed strictures on the aid to Israel. By identical votes of 62-11, it defeated first and third amendments; the first would have cut the funding to \$1.2 billion and the third would have suspended the President's right to use any of the funds for Israel after Jan. 31, until the U.S. Controller General certified that any funds impounded by the Administration or by the departments of agriculture and transportation are released. The second Fulbright amendment, defeated 50-25, stated that any military or economic aid to Israel shall not be construed as a commitment by the U.S. to Israel for its defense.

Arab states also are to benefit in the legislation. Wealthy Saudi Arabia is allowed \$20.2 million for military purposes although it has imposed an oil embargo against the U.S. Of that sum \$20 million is a credit for purchase of military equipment and \$200,000 is set aside for training Saudi military personnel. Jordan is listed to get \$120 million of which \$60 million is in grant supporting assistance; \$15 million in defense equipment; and \$35 million as a grant for military assistance; and almost \$4 million for "supply operations." Lebanon is programmed for \$5 million in military credit sales. While these sums are not specifically mandated by the legislation, the Administration will be able to use foreign aid funds to implement these allocations if it sees fit.

After the Senate turned back the Fulbright amendments, it took up the proposal by Sen. Robert Dole (R. Kansas) that the authorization message include a law that would forbid American organizations from training Arab pilots from countries that embargo oil shipments to the U.S. or help or protect individuals or groups which commit acts of violence against air commerce. Dole's amendment was designed as a basis for the U.S.-Civil Aeronautics Board to revoke agreements between American air lines and certain Arab countries. It was based on the disclosure by Rep. Jerry Litton (D. Mo.) that TWA is training Saudi Arabian pilots at its Kansas City center and using about 1800 gallons of aviation fuel an hour in their training although Saudi Arabia has banned all oil exports to the United States. TWA has been training Saudis to fly since 1946.

ARAB JOURNALIST WARNS ISRAEL NOT TO BE TOO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT GENEVA CONFERENCE

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA)—A leading Egyptian journalist has warned his readers that the Israeli vision of normal peaceful relations between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbors is not at all what the Arabs themselves have in mind. Sallah Jowdat, writing in a recent issue of the magazine "Al-Mussawar," said that a normal, neighborly peace—"sulh" in the full sense of the word—could only come about "if the Jews of Palestine... live together with the Arabs of Palestine in a secular state with no racialist characteristics whatsoever, and within the numerical proportions that existed before 1948."

Only if the Jews who arrived after 1948 returned to their countries of origin, leaving solely the pre-1948 Palestinian Jews and their children in the country alongside the Palestinian Arabs—only then could the term "sulh"—perhaps—be used, Jowdat explained. He wrote that Arabic has two words to translate the English term "peace"—"sulh" and "salaam." After 1967, he recalled, Golda Meir had said that she wanted Salaam to prevail so that she could drive in her car to Cairo or Damascus and go shopping there. Jowdat warned that the Geneva conference might confuse the two terms Sulh and Salaam—but as far as the Arabs were concerned this was to be strictly a Salaam conference, not a Sulh conference. If Israel agreed to withdraw totally from all the Arab lands that it had taken in 1967 and also to restore the rights of the Palestinian people—then on that basis the war and the armed struggle could come to an end, he said.

But that would not mean that Mrs. Meir would then be able to go shopping in Cairo or Damascus or Amman—which would imply the existence of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Arabs, as well as economic and human ties, Jowdat stated. "We rejected that when we were beaten and impotent. How much more so do we reject it now when we have conquered our defeat and approached the borders of victory?" he wrote. "Now we are able to attain peace by force of arms—but we have preferred to try first to attain it through diplomacy. Perhaps the efforts of the entire international community will succeed in bringing Israel back to its senses, so that it return to the 1967 lines and restore the rights of the Palestinians. Then there will be 'salaam'—but not 'sulh.'"

2 JDL'ERS ARRESTED BY FBI AFTER SPENDING HOUR IN EGYPTIAN UN MISSION

NEW YORK, Dec. 20 (JTA)—Two members of the Jewish Defense League were arrested by FBI agents today after spending an hour inside the Egyptian United Nations Mission here. The JDL claimed that the two, identified as Russell Kelner and Dov Hinkind, were invited inside, held against their will and beaten. They were charged by the FBI, however, with assaulting Egyptian personnel. An FBI spokesman said that three members of the Mission were injured. Mahmoud Ahmed, the Mission Press Counselor, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the two had "forced their way" into the building and staged a sit-down for one hour until they were removed by FBI agents.

Ambassador Clarence Ferguson of the United States UN delegation arrived at the scene in response to a telephone call from the Egyptian Ambassador, Ahmed Abdel Meguid. The two JDL members were part of a group demonstrating in front of the Mission with Israeli flags and signs claiming that Sinai belonged to Israel "since the time of Moses." The JDL said it planned to demonstrate outside the Mission again tonight. Kelner, from Philadelphia, was formerly a Spanish language teacher. He works at the JDL office here. Hinkind is a student at Brooklyn College. They were charged under recently enacted Federal legislation aimed at tightening security for diplomatic personnel. If convicted they face a penalty of up to three years in jail, \$5000 fine or both.

