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KISSINGER: U.S. IS NOT A 'GUARANTOR' OF ISRAEL-EGYPT DISENGAGEMENT ACCORD

But U.S. Will Be 'Involved' If Another War Erupts In The Mideast
By Joseph Polakoff, JTA Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 (JTA)--Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said today that the U.S. was not a "guarantor" of the Israeli-Egyptian disengagement agreement he helped work out last week but stated that if there is another outbreak of war in the Middle East the U.S. will be "involved" whether it is engaged in a diplomatic obligation or not. Kissinger, speaking at a press conference at the State Department, his first since returning from his intensive diplomatic rounds in the Middle East, told newsmen that when he was in Damascus Sunday, the Syrians for the first time put forward a concrete suggestion on a phase of negotiations with Israel, that he conveyed it to the Israelis and was promised an answer after next Sunday's Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem. He did not say what the phase was but it is assumed to relate to Israeli prisoners of war.

Referring to his major diplomatic achievement in the Middle East, Kissinger stressed that the U.S. was not formally bound to take any action in the event of a violation of the Israeli-Egyptian disengagement agreement. "In the sense of having a formal obligation of a specific action in case of a violation of the agreement we are not guarantors," he said. He added that if there is a new outbreak of war in the region and one side or the other asks for U.S. diplomatic help, "we will follow the course" from where the violation has occurred. Kissinger described the Nixon letters on the limitation of forces which were signed by both Premier Golda Meir of Israel and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as "a device" by the U.S. to convey to each party what the limitations should be and not a U.S. guarantee. He said the U.S. had agreed not to publish the content of that accord at the express request of both sides. But Congressional leaders whom he briefed at the White House yesterday were given a "detailed account of the assurances and unpublished contents," Kissinger said.

He said his own role in the disengagement negotiations was produced by the fact that both sides found it easier to communicate through an intermediary and that the Soviet Union had approved of his role because "the U.S. was in a better tactical position to promote progress" as it has relations with both sides and leverage on Israel. Kissinger stressed that the Soviet government gave "strong support" to the results of the disengagement negotiations. He also reiterated his praise for the Soviet role in setting up the Geneva peace conference which he said was useful, constructive and crucial.

Kissinger said that "We have every reason to believe" that the success of the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations on disengagement would lead to an end to the oil embargo. Failure to end it in a "reasonable time" would raise serious questions of confidence with respect to the Arab nations on this issue, he said. Asked about the reopening of the Suez Canal following the separation of forces, the Secretary of State said the U.S. had no overwhelming reason of its own to see the waterway reopened but regarded that event in the general context of peace.

He acknowledged that the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean would benefit from the reopening but that there was compensation in the positive step toward peace that the reactivated waterway would represent. Kissinger said that U.S. relations have improved with both Egypt and Syria. He announced that the first result of the improved relations with Syria will be the release tomorrow of an American citizen, John Bates, who was arrested by the Syrians in July, 1972 on charges of espionage.

MRS. MEIR DEFENDS DISENGAGEMENT ACCORD; BEIGIN, SHARON DENOUNCE IT AS CAPITULATION--GRUELLING 10-HOUR DEBATE MARKS OPENING OF KNESSET

By David Landau, JTA Jerusalem Bureau Chief

JERUSALEM, Jan. 22 (JTA)--Premier Golda Meir today strongly defended her government's disengagement agreement with Egypt, declaring that the only alternative was a resumption of war, that its aim was to advance toward a permanent peace settlement and that it was signed out of Israeli strength, not weakness. Mrs. Meir spoke at length during the first working session of the new Knesset. Her remarks were followed by a gruelling ten-hour debate during which Likud opposition leader Menachem Beigin denounced the agreement as capitulation and castigated Premier Meir's government in general and her top-ranking ministers individually for being party to it. But the fiery Likud spokesman could offer no viable alternative when he was asked pointedly for one by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. His Likud colleague, Gen. Ariel Sharon, attempted later on to answer the key question but his ideas were vague and Likud's policies remained unclear to objective listeners. At the end of the debate the Knesset voted 76-35 in favor of the accord.

Mrs. Meir referred to the agreement as "the fruit of our victory in the war, but we do not ignore the fact that it also reflects Egypt's achievements during the first days of the fighting." Speaking of the danger of escalation she revealed that since Oct. 22 there had been 1075 shooting incidents on the Egyptian front--costing Israel 22 dead and 107 wounded. As to the future, Mrs. Meir said the military and strategic position along the new line to be held by Israel would be "suitable to their military purpose in the event of fighting." She added: "Throughout the entire region east of the Gidi and Mitla passes the Israeli army will remain deployed in all strength required, prepared for any eventuality. The forces stationed in the restricted zones complement the basic military deployment of the Israeli army and their capability to meet any violence and its capability to meet any violation of the cease-fire."

Regarding the role of UNEF, the Premier declared: "We are not relying on the UN forces, but on ourselves." Nevertheless, she continued, so long as there was no permanent peace the UN role

was important in maintaining the agreed buffer zone. Any unilateral indication by Egypt that it wanted the UNEF force out would be taken by Israel as evidence of "menacing plans," she warned. The Premier stated that despite contrary announcements and statements emanating from Cairo, "a careful examination of statements by...authoritative Egyptian spokesmen shows that the government of Egypt intends to start clearing the canal and fitting it out for shipping once more, and to work towards the repopulation and rebuilding of the abandoned towns and restoration of normal civilian life there." This action could be "a highly significant turning point in the development of the region, a turning point in the direction of peace," Mrs. Meir said.

She stated that various documents which had not been published but which were part and parcel of the disengagement agreement had been shown by the government to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Mrs. Meir praised the U.S. government and President Nixon's help for Israel and particularly Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's personal efforts in bringing about the agreement. He, unlike previous middlemen, had not taken a position himself but had remained the honest broker; faithfully explaining Egypt's considerations to us and also making clear to Egypt Israel's positions, the Premier said.

She was vague on the American role in the agreement itself, but said that because of its role in bringing about the agreement it "became a factor capable of testifying to the intentions of the parties...and the exact nature of the commitments undertaken by them. Israel attaches considerable importance to this role played by the U.S. The U.S. could prove invaluable in the promotion of relations between the two parties and the continued observance of the settlement." Regarding Syria--she regretted that she could report no progress, with the Damascus government still refusing to publish the POW lists and allow Red Cross visits. "This refusal is unsurpassed in its brutality" she said. Kissinger "was unable to tell us that he had succeeded in his efforts to move matters from a state of deadlock but we have been promised that his efforts will continue."

Beigin flayed the government for 40 minutes. It entered into a fateful agreement, he said, without asking for a mandate from the voters to undertake a unilateral withdrawal before there is peace. He claimed that the Meir government had in fact abandoned all of its past positions--namely that no Egyptian troops would be permitted east of the Suez Canal and that there would be no linkage between an Israeli withdrawal from the canal's east banks and Resolution 242. These were the positions taken when Israel first proposed an interim agreement in 1970 and were supported even by the most dovish elements in the government, Beigin said.

Now all of these principles have gone by the board, Beigin charged. The government has given in to Egyptian demands for linkage, for troops on the east bank, for withdrawal without peace--and all this while Egyptian and other Arab spokesmen still aspired to the obliteration of Israel, Beigin said. The Likud leader also served warning on the government not to enter into any agreement with Jordan that would "re-divide Eretz Israel." He claimed there were 54 Likud and religious bloc votes in the Knesset plus many Labor votes that oppose "this talk of disengagement with Jordan."

Dayan said Israel's prime motive in accepting the disengagement agreement had been that it was based on an Egyptian undertaking to reopen the Suez Canal and restore normal life and commerce in the towns that flanked it. Despite contradictory statements from Egypt, Dayan believed this was indeed President Sadat's intention and that he sought if not peace at least the restoration of peaceful life in the canal zone. Dayan conceded that the new Israeli lines were not as good as the Canal line but afforded good defensive positions. He said Israel could not know for sure that Egypt would abide by its commitments--but the risk was one worth taking since the new agreement did not prejudice Israel's vital security needs. If Egypt did reopen the canal as it promised, the shipping and connected commercial activity would in themselves serve to reduce the possibility of a new outbreak of fighting, Dayan said.

Sharon joined Beigin in denouncing the disengagement agreement. In his maiden Knesset speech, the former division commander on the Suez front repeated his charge made at a press conference several days ago that the government relinquished militarily vital topographical areas of the Sinai which had cost hundreds of casualties to defend in the Yom Kippur War. He said the new lines were relatively unimportant in military terms. He said Likud wanted a peace or other arrangement with Egypt no less than anyone else and that his party had a peace plan which involved fewer risks for Israel. He did not say what it was. He insisted that it was a grave mistake for Israel to regard the reopening of the Suez Canal and the rehabilitation of civilian life in the canal-side towns as an indication of Egypt's peaceful intentions. Sharon noted, as an example, that the repopulation of the canal-side towns will not prevent war as it had not prevented the war of attrition in 1969 when three-quarters of a million people still lived in the region.

The vote for the government position now paves the way for Israel to begin its withdrawal Friday from the banks of the canal. In the vote all factions--including Rakah--voted with the government and only Likud opposed. Veteran observers saw in the Rakah vote the first clear sign that Moscow is satisfied with the disengagement agreement and was probably involved in Kissinger's efforts, or at least approved them.

NEW YORK (JTA)--David Azbel, a 62-year-old physics professor, has threatened to begin a hunger strike in Moscow which he said was in protest against the treatment of Soviet dissidents Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as well as over the denial of an exit visa to himself. The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry which learned of Azbel's intended action by telephone from Moscow, said the scientist was circulating an open letter in which he says he feels as much a prisoner in the Soviet Union now as he was for 16 years between 1935 and 1951 during the Stalin era when he was in forced labor camps. Prof. Azbel first applied for a visa in April, 1972 and has been rejected repeatedly, the SSSJ said. Meanwhile, two friends of Azbel have agreed to join him in the hunger strike; Prof. Vitaly Rubin, an expert on China, and Benjamin Gorokhox, a screenwriter. The SSSJ said that both men had applied for exit visas but had been denied them.

ORTHODOX RABBIS WARN AGAINST NON-ORTHODOX CONVERSIONS

JERUSALEM, Jan. 22 (JTA)—Orthodox rabbis from the United States and other countries, seeking to preserve Orthodox hegemony over religious and personal matters in Israel attacked conversions made under non-Orthodox auspices. Rabbi Louis Bernstein of New York, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, warned that if Israel recognized conversions performed by Reform or Conservative rabbis—not in accordance with halacha—it would gravely prejudice the Orthodox rabbinate's fight against intermarriage in the U.S. and around the world.

Rabbi Bernstein and some of his Orthodox colleagues spoke at a press conference following the closing session of the RCA's annual mid-winter convention that opened here last Thursday. They attacked local Reform and Conservative rabbis who oppose amending Israel's Law of Return to stipulate that converts coming to Israel as immigrants must have been converted in accordance with halacha—meaning Orthodox rites—in order to be recognized as Jews.

The "Who is a Jew?" amendment is one of the key demands of the National Religious Party for joining a Labor-led coalition government. But Rabbi Bernstein insisted that he was speaking only for the non-political RCA—not the Mizrahi of which he is vice-president—and that his remarks were not inspired by the NRP.

The Reform and Conservative movements in America have urged Israeli leaders not to surrender to Orthodox demands on the conversion issue on grounds that it would alienate the millions of Jews in the U.S. and other countries who are not Orthodox. But Rabbi Bernstein, alleging that a majority of world Jewry was Orthodox, pressed his claims on grounds that Orthodox Jews in the U.S. were most faithful to Israel, had the highest aliyah rate and were most active in fund-raising and political lobbying for Israel.

Should Not Force Views On Others

Rabbi Bernard Casper, the Chief Rabbi of South Africa, claimed that Orthodoxy's alleged majority gave it rights. But he conceded that these did not include the right to force its views on others. He said that in South Africa not all Jews were observant. Nevertheless, he said, a vast majority recognized the authority of the rabbinate and the rabbinical tribunals in matters of conversion and marriage.

Chief Rabbi Isaac Cohen of Ireland said there were Reform and other Jews in his country but that all recognized the need for uniformity in the crucial questions of conversion and personal status. He said that intermarriage was not a major problem in Ireland because of its predominantly Catholic population. He claimed that all European rabbis would consider it "irresponsible impertinence" for any religious groups on the outside to attempt to intervene in Israeli affairs and introduce controversy. Rabbi Cohen said the basic problem was that Orthodoxy demanded from a convert a sincere commitment to observe halacha while Reform and Conservative rabbis were prepared to dispense with that.

At another press conference Sunday, Rabbi David B. Hollander, president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, claimed that if Israel accepted non-Orthodox marriage and divorce, it would spell the disintegration of American Jewry. "What's good enough for Israel is good enough for them," he said.

A convention of American and European Or-

thodox rabbis meeting here under the aegis of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, issued a plea to the government yesterday to amend the Law of Return. But the convention created a new split between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief rabbis of Israel. It was convened by Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren against the wishes of his Sephardic counterpart, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who boycotted the sessions.

LEWIS L. STRAUSS, FORMER AEC CHAIRMAN, DEAD AT AGE 77

NEW YORK, Jan. 22 (JTA)—Funeral services will be held here on Thursday and a memorial service will be held in Washington on Friday for Lewis L. Strauss, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, who died at his farm home in Brandy Station, Va. yesterday. He was 77. The funeral rites will be held at Congregation Emanu-El, the Reform synagogue of which Strauss had been president from 1938 to 1948. He also had been active in the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Theological Seminary and the American Friends of the Alliance Israelite Universelle after he retired.

Mr. Strauss was a member of the Atomic Energy Commission from 1946 to 1950 and its chairman from 1953 to 1958. He led the successful battle in the commission for development of the hydrogen bomb. A self-taught amateur physicist, he had sought out physicists fleeing from Nazi Germany and learned from them that uranium had been fissioned in Germany, an essential first step toward creating an atomic bomb. He also served as acting Secretary of Commerce and was a partner in the Kuhn Loeb investment firm.

PROSECUTION CALLS FOR SENTENCES RANGING FROM 6 1/2 - 9 YEARS IN PRISON

OSLO, Jan. 22 (JTA)—The prosecution called for sentences ranging from six-and-a-half to nine years in prison for six alleged Israeli agents as formal proceedings in the Boushicki murder trial were concluded here during the weekend. Defense attorneys pleaded for the release of the defendants, claiming the prosecution had not presented conclusive evidence of the defendants' guilt in the slaying of Ahmed Boushicki in Lillehammer in eastern Norway. "I can accept that the defendants and the Israeli government view Boushicki's murder as an act of war," State Prosecutor Haakon Wiker said in his closing statement. "But for Norwegian authorities it was a criminal act," he said.

Wiker asked for nine-year prison terms for Abraham Gehmer, and Dan Aerbel, both allegedly experienced Israeli intelligence operatives; a seven-year term for Sylvia Rafael; and six-and-a-half-years for Michael Dorf, Zvi Steinberg and Marianne Gladnikoff. The defendants are Jewish and claim to be Israeli residents.

Defense attorneys, led by top Norwegian criminal lawyer Annaeus Schoedt, maintained in their closing statements that the prosecution had not presented concrete evidence of the defendants' guilt, rejected prosecution claims that the wrong man had been killed, and that the "shadowing and information-gathering activities" of the group were not covered by Norway's espionage laws. A final verdict in the case is not expected before the beginning of Feb., court sources said.

AMSTERDAM (JTA)—The Netherlands Association of Fencing Instructors has set up a fencing award in honor of Andre Spitzer, one of the Israeli athletes killed in the Olympic Games in Munich. Spitzer was a member of the Association.

