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SPECIAL TO JTA

"WHY AM I HERE?" -- THE PERSONAL TESTAMENT OF RAFI UNGER, KILLED IN ACTION

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA)--First there were rumors and then came the news. Rafi Unger, 26, the promising Israel Radio commentator, was among those killed in a troop carrier in the Sinai's southern front while covering the events for Kol Israel. And then came his kit, which was found rusty and stained. In the kit were a number of tape recorder cassettes. Some had not been used. Some had a vivid description of a cruel war. One of the tapes was private. A slip of paper said: "Not for publication. Kindly keep it for me till after the war, till I return." Rafi Unger did not return. Kol Israel, the broadcasting service, sent the private personal tape to Unger's parents. They listened to it. It was a man talking with himself, with his soul. The parents gave it to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency for publication so that the Jewish public and Jewish youth might learn the answer to the question "Why am I here? Why does a Jewish youth find himself in the midst of a war?" What follows is Rafi Unger's statement.

"We are on the move southwards. I have some time to do some thinking. I found myself between two soldiers in an armored troop carrier and within a short time I learned--though I am not surprised--after all, it's a war--that these troop carriers are vulnerable to any kind of firearms, except small arms. I am thinking, even now, as I am talking into the microphone, and I am asking myself, why, for heaven's sake, am I here? Actually I have no reply right away. While in Tel Aviv I told my colleagues: Look, there is one meshugener called Unger. He could stay behind in Tel Aviv--and yet he goes down to the front. He know that everything can happen to him--and yet he goes down. One of them, a war-experienced friend, snapped that I was a fool. Am I really a fool? - By God, I do not know.

"True, I am not a 'lion.' I never looked for bravery, for danger. And yet, when this moment came, when I was given the choice, I felt that my place is here, with the combat people. I know, I am sure that it would have irked me all my life, I would not be able to explain myself, if I would not be here now. It is difficult to explain why, when already in the south, I did not stay in the rear command post but ran after a moving armored troop carrier and when, in the first carrier in which the brigade commander was emplaced, there was no room for me, I hurried after the second vehicle and jumped onto it as it was already in moving. Why? Was it curiosity, carelessness? Possibly, but not all. It was first and foremost the search for the feeling of experience. It is the inability to live in this country without experiencing what has become part and parcel of the life of people of this country, young and adults. I think that it is this that brought me onto this armored troop carrier--moving towards the unknown.

"I have no fears though there is a natural sense of worry. Actually I wanted everything to come to an end and return safely home. It sounds banal to say so, and I would have laughed at myself about such a phrase had it not been for the fact that I am on the front, at a place where the possibility of getting hit is real. Nevertheless, I feel that my place is here, whether I broadcast or not. I have to live this experience of the front, of the battle for life which entails life or death, to live it here, on the sands of Sinai. These are the true reasons. If I hide anything from myself, it is a thing which I am not even prepared to reveal to my heart. And therefore I feel no other reasons. The microphone was the pretext. To be here is an order of my heart, my logic, my senses. This is what I feel now, what I think now."

And then Rafi Unger noticed a succah on a troop carrier. He reported that too. And then there was no more reporting from Rafi Unger. He was killed together with General Avraham Mendler in the troop carrier.

ISRAELI TROOPS HOPE FOR PEACE AS THEY CONTINUE PULLOUT

By Yitzhak Shargil, JTA Tel Aviv Correspondent

ON THE SUEZ CANAL FRONT, Feb. 21 (JTA)--Israeli vehicles bearing the last Israeli soldiers from the Israeli bridgehead on the west bank of the Suez Canal today carried such signs on their sides as "Goodbye Africa," and "Our Leaving Egypt is a Hope for Peace." Standing here, for the last time on the massive land bridge built by Israelis across the canal, I watched the almost endless convoys of trucks, tanks, halftracks, buses, jeeps, armored troop carriers and self-propelled guns moving eastward to the Sinai Peninsula, masses of men and equipment indicating how huge the force had been that Israel placed on the canal's west bank.

The scene had a slight carnival flavor. Tank crewmen threw colored smoke grenades. Vehicle antennae became masts on which colorful balloons, flags and even pieces of cloth fluttered in the

breeze. Soldiers were seen opening bottles of champagne, mainly to produce noises, among a variety of makeshift noise-makers. The long convoy came to a standstill when the lead units reached the western end of the bridge and found a parade in progress. A crack brigade of paratroopers, the first Israelis to cross the canal westward, heard their commander recount that event of 129 days ago and then tell them "we fold our flag here with a desire and a hope for peace."

Lt. Eli Cohen, the first Israeli soldier to set foot on the west side of the canal, was invited to lower a flag on a mast. He did so. The soldiers then returned to their vehicles and moved to the east side of the canal--all but one unit, whose members ended the Israeli presence on the west canal bank by swimming the 80 meters to the south bank. The pullout was completed on schedule at noon, Sinai time.

Among the returning troops were men who had not taken off their field uniforms for four months. Some had dusty equipment, many had beards. All

had the look of soldiers proud of their accomplishments, both in smashing through the Egyptian weak spot on the east bank in October and in the withdrawal today. The paratroop commander said "It was a good feeling when we crossed westwards. Now we have mixed feelings but we hope that it will be for peace." A few more explosions resounded from the west bank as Israeli engineers made their last demolitions and then they too crossed the bridge.

Military police struggled to keep the convoys moving smoothly but they were hampered by each soldier taking a last look or a last picture. At midday, the paratroop commander handed over a huge wooden key to the officer in command of the United Nations Emergency Force, which took over the area evacuated by Israel today to turn it over later to the Egyptians. Israeli units now on the east bank will stay in their positions until March 5 when the final phase of disengagement will be ended. Until then, Israeli liaison officers will remain on the west bank at the tripartite command post north of Fayid.

Meanwhile, Israel returned today 22 more Egyptian POWs captured during the war. The exchange took place at the United Nations Katar-Baloosa road checkpoint under the auspices of the Red Cross. These POWs comprised several scores of Egyptian soldiers and officers that were captured or gave themselves up to Israeli forces after the conclusion of the major POW exchange which followed the cease-fire.

KEATING: KISSINGER FACES A COMPLEX TASK IN NEW DISENGAGEMENT EFFORT

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA)--"Secretary of State Henry Kissinger faces a more complex and sensitive task in helping bring about a disengagement of forces between Israel and Syria than he did last month in the separation with Egypt." This evaluation was made last night by U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Keating speaking to a group of American Pioneer Women who concluded their study mission in Israel.

According to Keating, Kissinger will not be doing the same shuttle exercise as he did with Egypt but will seek this time to establish a framework for negotiations between Israel and Syria on military disengagement. "It is a delicate task, no less so than was faced earlier in helping Egypt and Israel reach subsequent agreement on separation of forces. In some aspects, this time it is more complex, more sensitive," Keating said.

The Ambassador said that the changed conditions after the war presented an unparalleled opportunity for peace, since war was no longer an attractive alternative. He also stressed the continuing U.S. commitment to Israel's independence and security saying that it never had been greater than under Nixon's administration.

APPEAL ON BEHALF OF HUNGER STRIKERS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA)--Boris Ainbinder, a former Soviet Jewish activist, appealed yesterday to a group of Senators on behalf of three Moscow Jewish friends now conducting a hunger strike over refusal of Soviet authorities to grant them exit visas. Ainbinder told the Senators that during recent months conditions for Soviet Jews had worsened and that David Azbel, Vitaly Rubin and Vladimir Galafsky had resorted to the hunger strike to protest their situation.

Ainbinder also said that all of the telephones of leading Moscow Jewish activists, including that of the hunger strikers, had been disconnected. Sen. Vance Hartke (D.Ind.) was host for the

informal meeting of nine Senators. The Senators questioned Ainbinder about the effect on the situation of Soviet Jews of the amendment sponsored by Sen. Henry Jackson (D.Wash.) to the proposed Trade Reform Act.

Hearings on the Trade Reform Act are due to begin in early March before the Senate Finance Committee. A number of its members attended the meeting at which Ainbinder strongly endorsed the Jackson amendment. He said his friends in the Soviet Union believe adoption of the amendment will aid the cause of free emigration. Ainbinder has been touring this country under auspices of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The Conference and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry jointly released yesterday the text of an appeal from the hunger strikers which said "How many thousands, and maybe tens of thousands, of parents refuse to give permission to their children, even those with over-age children themselves, simply out of fear for their own fate?" The message, in the form of "An Opeh Letter to the People of the United States," said the Jackson amendment made "certain aspects of Soviet-American relations dependent on free emigration from the USSR and that means dependent on morality, international law and human rights."

They added that "those who, in the name of global and till now value goals, are prepared to absolve the Soviet government and consider that human rights regarding emigration are being fulfilled, are committing a tragic mistake." They said that was why they were turning to the American people "at a time when we are staging a hunger strike as an extreme way of making the Soviet government respect our human and civil rights."

PLANS TO COUNTER ANTI-ISRAEL PROPAGANDA ON WORLD-WIDE SCALE

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA)--A special four-day session of the Zionist General Council ended today with announcement of plans for a world-wide information campaign to counter massive anti-Israel propaganda. The session was called to study post-Yom Kippur War problems. The campaign will stress the "absolute right" of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, Israel's aspirations for peace, and the link between the energy crisis with economic and political factors, rather than with the Mideast conflict.

The Council urged international organizations, such as the Red Cross and the United Nations to do their utmost to induce Syria to treat Israeli POWs in accordance with the Geneva Convention and agree to an exchange of POWs with Israel. The delegates suggested formation of a common front of oil-consuming countries to achieve a common policy toward the "political and economic blackmail" used by the Arab oil states, as well as greater efforts to produce alternative sources of energy.

The delegates noted "with regret" a drop in volunteers coming to Israel in recent months at a time when Israel needed more manpower and called on all Jewish organizations to encourage Jewish youth to become volunteers, declaring it considered the volunteer effort a permanent program. Yitzhak Navon, chairman of the Zionist Council, declared that if the World Zionist Movement fails to organize mass immigration, "the State would be well advised to appeal directly to Jews abroad and help form groups of would-be immigrants." The one discordant note was the boycott of the sessions by the World Confederation of General Zionists who notified the Jewish Agency that attending would conflict with their position of non-identification with political parties in Israel.

**COALITION WOES: ON WEDNESDAY THE RABBINATE SAID NO
MRS. MEIR BEGINS TO FILL CABINET POSTS IN FIRST MINORITY GOV'T IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY**
By David Landau And Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA)--Premier Golda Meir began today the task of filling Cabinet posts in the first minority government in Israel's history. She informed President Ephraim Katzir last night --and later informed the nation on television--that she will head a Cabinet based on the Labor Alignment's 51 Knesset seats plus four seats of the Independent Liberal Party and three of Labor affiliated Arab lists (Progress and Development and Bedouin and Villagers). These will assure her new government of only 58 votes, less than a simple majority in the 120-member Knesset.

The establishment of a minority government with all of its attendant risks was forced on the Premier late yesterday when the National Religious Party, acting under orders of the Chief Rabbinate Council, refused to join a Labor-led coalition on the basis of a compromise to defer resolution of the controversial "Who is a Jew" issue for one year. The NRP's 10 Knesset seats were essential to the formation of a majority coalition. But Mrs. Meir would have lost the participation of both the ILP and the Mapam faction of the Labor Alignment had she bowed to Orthodox demands for a commitment to amend the Law of Return. The Premier asked the President for, and was granted, one week to form her new Cabinet. She said she would leave open three portfolios for the NRP should it reconsider and decide to join the government, but indicated they would not be left open indefinitely.

In her statement informing Katzir of her decision to form a narrow-based government, Mrs. Meir expressed "regret that in spite of many efforts of the many people conducting negotiations" it was impossible to reach an accord with the NRP because of the "Who is a Jew" issue. "I am sorry I cannot bring you something more complete," she said. It was apparent that Premier Meir decided to risk a minority government rather than ask for an extension of time to form a broader coalition because of the urgency of impending foreign policy decisions. U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger is due in the Middle East next Monday to begin a new round of personal diplomacy aimed at getting Israel-Syria disengagement talks started. Mrs. Meir and her Labor Party colleagues felt it was essential that a new government rather than the old care-taker regime negotiate with Kissinger.

But the view was expressed in some circles today that while Israel needed more than ever a government capable of taking clear, bold decisions and seizing the diplomatic initiative, it has gotten instead one whose diplomatic freedom of maneuver will be circumscribed by the lack of a parliamentary majority. It was clear to everybody that Mrs. Meir will need the strongest possible Cabinet. The participation of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan remained doubtful today although the Premier expressed optimism that Dayan would ultimately reconsider his decision not to join the new government. Dayan met with Mrs. Meir yesterday afternoon and reiterated his unwillingness to participate in the Cabinet "under present conditions"--meaning that he did not feel he had sufficient support within the Labor Party. Nevertheless, Dayan's old Rafi faction is going along with the formation of a minority government despite its oft stated preference for a national unity coalition that would include Likud.

The NRP meanwhile was in a state of disarray and bitter recriminations were exchanged last night between its various factions. Except for a brief period in the 1950s, the NRP was always represented in Israeli governments and had exerted influence, particularly on religious matters, far out of proportion to its minority status. But yesterday it was clearly outmaneuvered in what was obviously a struggle to enhance the power of Israel's Orthodox religious establishment. "Hoisted on its own petard," said one newspaper headline today commenting on the NRP's recent tactics. Party leaders who had been ready to join a Labor-led government on the basis of compromise on the "Who is a Jew" issue were particularly bitter toward their colleague, Yitzhak Rafael, whose idea it had been in the first place to consult the Chief Rabbinate on the matter. It became obvious, in the light of hindsight, that this had been a momentous blunder.

As soon as Mrs. Meir announced her decision, speculation began on who would fill her Cabinet seats, particularly who would be asked to serve as Defense Minister if Dayan refuses to reconsider his decision not to serve. The names of two former chiefs of staff--Gen. Haim Barlev who is Minister of Commerce and Industry in the outgoing government, and Gen. Yitzhak Rabin, former Ambassador to Washington--topped the list of possibilities. Also mentioned was Transport Minister Shimon Peres who served as Deputy Defense Minister years ago when David Ben Gurion held the Defense post as well as the Premiership.

Mrs. Meir will also have to find candidates to fill other key Cabinet posts that have become or will soon become vacant. Justice Minister Yaacov Shimshon Shapiro left the Cabinet immediately after the Yom Kippur War. Labor Minister Yosef Almogi is leaving to become Mayor of Haifa and Housing Minister Zeev Sharef is retiring from public life. All three belong to Mrs. Meir's old Mapai faction. Knesset member Haim Zadok was mentioned today as the likely replacement for Shapiro. Former Tel Aviv Mayor Yehoshua Rabinowitz or Moshe Bar-Am, the Labor whip in the Knesset, have been mentioned for Sharef's post. Deputy Minister of Absorption Shlomo Rosen is expected to replace retiring Natan Peled. Both belong to Mapam. The ILP, which has only one Cabinet post in the outgoing government--Minister of Tourism Moshe Kol--may receive another to be filled by Gideon Hausner.

NEW YORK (JTA)--Some 150 students and faculty members at Princeton University in New Jersey staged a sympathy hunger strike today in solidarity with David Azbel, Vitaly Rubin and Vladimir Galatsky who are continuing their hunger strike in Azbel's Moscow apartment which began last Friday, it was reported by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. According to the NCSJ, New Jersey's U.S. Senators Clifford P. Case, a Republican, and Harrison A. Williams, a Democrat, sent messages expressing their sympathy with the hunger-striking Soviet Jewish activists and the action of the students and faculty members. At the same time a group of some 200 students and faculty members at Columbia University here held a peaceful rally on the college campus backing university administration's efforts to convince the USSR to permit Rubin, an authority on ancient China, to come to Columbia to teach.

JUDGE EXPECTED TO SIGN ORDER ENDING JEWISH-HISPANIC DISPUTE OVER EAST SIDE HOUSING PROJECT

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA)--Barring last-minute objections, a federal judge is expected to sign an order here tomorrow ending a dispute between Jewish and Puerto Rican groups which has kept a new housing project on Manhattan's Lower East Side vacant for more than two years.

The dispute began when former Puerto Rican residents in the 14-block Seward Park Extension Urban Renewal area brought suit, through Mobilization for Youth Legal Services, in federal court. MFY contended that the City Housing Authority had illegally given preference to families outside the designated area, most of them Jewish, in renting the 360 apartments in the two 23-story low-income buildings in the project.

The National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA) which, with the Legal Aid Society, represented the Jewish community of the Lower East Side in the lengthy litigation which followed, said that the Housing Authority granted 171 leases out of 360 to whites, mostly Jewish, residents of nearby areas. That arrangement, plus a number of leases given to white former project site tenants would have resulted in an ethnic make-up to avoid ghettoization of the project, a COLPA spokesman said.

Under the compromise agreement slated for approval tomorrow by Judge Morris Lasker, Jewish applicants will receive about 120 apartments, or about 50 less than the initial assignment of apartments, the COLPA spokesman said. He pointed out, however, that there had been a possibility, if the courts had sustained the MFY contention that the law required priority in assignment of apartments to former residents of the site, that there might have been far fewer Jewish families receiving apartments.

May Start Moving In Next Month

The Housing Authority granted the 171 leases to Jewish families after deciding that former site residents who had been re-located to other housing, had no automatic priority for the new apartments and that Jewish families had preference for buildings near a synagogue. The two buildings are equipped with "Sabbath elevators" which can be set to stop automatically on each floor. The COLPA spokesman said the tenants were expected to start moving into the two buildings before the end of March.

In a ruling on the suit by MFY, Federal Judge Marvin Frankel issued in May 1972 a temporary injunction barring the city from renting 197 disputed apartments on grounds the city had violated the constitutional rights of Puerto Ricans, Blacks and others by giving preference to Jews. That ruling was appealed by the City Housing Authority, with COLPA and Legal Aid Society intervening on behalf of the Jewish leaseholders. A series of lower court judges, including Judge Lasker, ruled in favor of the Hispanic plaintiffs on a number of issues in the case, leading to fear for the continuing viability of the Lower East Side Jewish community, the COLPA spokesman said.

Last Sept. 17, the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the lower courts and ordered the case back to Judge Lasker for a trial of issues related to the legal arguments, particularly the question of ghettoization, to be determined at the trial. A series of conciliation meetings followed to avoid the trial.

The settlement was outlined in a hearing not-

ice issued by Judge Lasker, which provides for a prescribed ethnic balance in the two buildings, with additional low-income apartments available to members of both groups in a three-building privately-sponsored project, mainly middle-income, in the renewal area. The two low-income buildings will be populated by about 60 percent Hispanic and non-white residents, and 40 percent white residents. (By Ben Gallob.)

REID: U.S. MUST NOT ALLOW OIL BLACKMAIL TO INFLUENCE ITS POLICY IN THE MIDEAST

MIAMI BEACH, Feb. 21 (JTA)--Rep. Ogden R. Reid (D NY) declared here that the United States must be prepared to meet its energy needs without oil from Arab countries rather than knuckle to pressure for a policy change that could endanger Israel. "The United States must never permit oil blackmail to influence by one iota foreign policy in the Middle East," Reid told the 1200 delegates from the U.S. and Canada attending the three-day annual Histadrut Economic Conference for Israel. "If necessary, the United States must become totally self-reliant in energy."

Reid, a former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor of New York, also said that any peace agreement between Syria and Israel must include the right of Syrian Jews to emigrate. "Syria has allowed no official emigration since 1950," Reid noted. "The United States must never place economic expediency above human rights." A further condition to meaningful disengagement in the Golan Heights is release by Syria of names of Israeli prisoners of war, he added. Reid warned that neither the United States nor Russia should seek to impose a settlement in the Middle East, but that the U.S. must work for a change in Soviet policy "from one of controlled tension to one of genuine, lasting peace."

In a similar vein, Simon Weber, editor of the daily Forward in New York, the only daily Yiddish-language newspaper in the U.S., said that American Jewry "must not relax our efforts, both politically and economically, in behalf of Israel. Politically, we must influence the government of the U.S. not to submit to blackmail, and economically, we must support Israel in all areas with even greater participation in the United Jewish Appeal, State of Israel Bonds and through the newest dimension in giving--the Israel Histadrut Foundation. Every Jew must recognize that Israel is an additional dependent, a dependent to be recognized both while he is alive and in his will."

Weber, who was honored by the leaders of the Labor Zionist Movement, Workman's Circle and Israel Histadrut Foundation, warned that "In spite of all the concessions Israel made and is ready to make, the Arabs are not ready to accept Israel and to make a genuine peace based on mutual recognition of boundaries, and ultimately, diplomatic and economic relations between Israel and her neighbors." He added that the Arabs are apparently now trying to achieve what they could not gain on the battlefield, the disappearance of the Jewish State. Dr. Sol Stein of New York was re-elected national president of the Histadrut Foundation.

NEW YORK (JTA)--Mayor Abraham Beame accepted the 16-volume Encyclopaedia Judaica on behalf of the Municipal Reference and Research Center of the City of New York. The presentation took place in the Mayor's office and was made by Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor-in-Chief, and Arieh Steiner, president of Keter, Inc., the Jerusalem based publishing house.