



daily news bulletin

Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency 165 West 46th St. New York, N.Y. 10036

© 1975, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.

Vol. XLII - 58th Year

Monday, March 31, 1975

No. 61

JERUSALEM RETICENT ON FORD STATEMENT BLAMING ISRAEL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 30 (JTA)--Official sources here were careful not to react Thursday night and Friday to news of President Ford's interview in Hearst newspapers in which he blamed Israeli intransigence for the failure of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's latest Mideast effort.

Privately, officials tended to hope that Kissinger's news conference last Wednesday in Washington in which he carefully avoided apportioning blame--represented a more up-to-date and more balanced U.S. official position. They noted that Ford had given his interview March 24, before Kissinger's press conference and when the President was reportedly highly angered and upset by the failure of the shuttle effort. They ventured to hope--privately--that Washington might since then have cooled its wrath.

Some well placed sources here said--again in private briefings--that Geneva is not necessarily the sole available option at this stage. They mentioned "proximity talks" as a possible alternative, noting that when during the Kissinger shuttle the prospect of failure was aired, the possibility of "proximity talks" was raised.

It was noted here that Egypt so far has been less enthusiastic in public than might have been expected over the reconvening of the Geneva conference. "Proximity talks" were first mooted back in 1971 by the U.S., but they never got off the ground. Kissinger, it was recalled, was considering reviving the idea in October 1973 when the war pre-empted him.

Information Campaign Launched

Meanwhile, sources here reported that Israeli Ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, has so far been encouraging in his reports to Jerusalem about meetings with leading Congressional figures as part of Israel's campaign to explain the breakdown of the shuttle.

The Israel Foreign Ministry is sending high-powered delegations to the U.S. and elsewhere to help in the information work. The first team will be led by former information and intelligence head Aharon Yariv, former Air Force head Dan Tolkowsky, former intelligence chief Meir Amit, and Commerce and Industry Minister Haim Barlev. (See related stories.)

INFORMATION DRIVE TO INVOLVE LEADING ISRAELI PERSONALITIES

JERUSALEM, March 30 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Yigal Allon has asked two major political rivals, Knesseters Moshe Dayan and Abba Eban, to join Israel's information campaign to explain Israel's role and position during the second-stage talks with Egypt that were mediated by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. Allon has asked Eban to meet with him this week to discuss this subject and also sent a cable to Dayan who is enroute from Japan to the United States to join in the information effort when he speaks in the U.S. on fund-raising missions.

Similar cables were sent to Yitzhak Navon,

head of the Knesset Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, who is also due soon in the U.S., and to Knesseter Elimelech Rimalt, chairman of the Liberal's Executive, who is now in Europe. Other personalities have also been asked to join the information campaign.

PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE TO LAUNCH NATION-WIDE DRIVE TO MOBILIZE BROAD-SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA)--A nation-wide drive to mobilize broad support for Israel will be launched tomorrow by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Leaders of the Jewish organizations will meet to inaugurate "an intensified program to tell the American people the facts about the Arab-Israel conflict," according to Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the Conference. Speakers will include Simcha Dinitz, Israeli Ambassador to the United States and Representatives Belia Abzug, Elizabeth Holtzman, Edward I. Koch and Lester L. Wolff, all New York Democrats.

In a statement announcing the meeting, Rabbi Miller declared: "Egypt's intransigence in refusing to make further progress toward peace has created a whole new situation in the Middle East. Already we hear threats of a 'jihad' or holy war from Anwar Sadat and expressions of satisfaction by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syrian officials that the road to peace has been blocked again. Our meeting will explore the steps that must be taken now to deal with these developments."

In a "Middle East Memo" commenting on the suspension of Dr. Kissinger's peace mission, the Presidents Conference declared: "It was Israel that made the major concessions and Egypt that rejected them; Israel that offered to give up territory and Egypt that refused; Israel that asked for peace and Egypt that insisted on continuing the state of war. The failure of the peace talks rests with Egypt. That responsibility is clear and unequivocal. It confirms once again Egypt's--and the Arab world's--continuing refusal to accept Israel's right to exist."

The "Middle East Memo," a periodic analysis of current developments affecting U.S. security and Jewish interests, concluded with this projection of how the U.S. would respond to the suspension of Kissinger's efforts: "The American people will understand who in the Middle East offers concessions for peace and who refuses to renounce war. By the same token, the American people will continue to support the policy of our government in defending America's strategic interests by providing Israel with the economic, military and political support necessary to deter Arab attack and to keep alive the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

RABIN TAKES DIM VIEW OF SADAT'S STATEMENTS TO EGYPTIAN PARLIAMENT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 30 (JTA)--Premier Yitzhak Rabin took a dim view today of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's statement to the Egyptian parliament last night that Egypt would agree to only a three-month extension of the mandate of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Sinai which

expires next month. Rabin described it as a "negative indication" at today's Cabinet meeting according to a statement released to the press.

It was Israel's first official reaction to Sadat's speech before the People's Assembly in Cairo. Observers noted that those parts of Rabin's remarks made public after the Cabinet session were extremely cautious in tone and contained no reference to what some consider to be more "positive" aspects of Sadat's speech, especially his announcement that the Suez Canal would be re-opened on June 5.

Rabin stressed that UNEF "in its present form" was an integral part of the disengagement agreements, meaning that up to now it had been a matter of course that its mandate would be extended for a minimum period of six months. "Failure to resume the UNEF mandate, or a change in its duration, would be regarded by Israel as a negative indication," the Premier's statement said. It added that Israel would continue to observe the cease-fire agreement and the disengagement agreement on the basis of reciprocity.

Rabin repeated a statement made by Foreign Minister Yigal Alon on a television interview over the weekend that Israel was ready to advance toward peace "in every possible way." One possibility still open, according to Rabin was through an interim agreement with Egypt for which the good offices of the United States are essential. "This is important for both an interim agreement and the convening of the Geneva conference," Rabin said.

Dilemma Confronting Government

Israel's extreme caution in its reaction to Sadat's speech reflected a dilemma confronting the government, sources here said. On one hand, Israel does not want to appear in the position of rejecting an apparent attempt by Sadat to leave the door open to further negotiations--possibly before the Geneva conference is reconvened. On the other hand, Israel does not want to welcome a political statement that, as Rabin noted, has definite negative implications for Israel.

The positive aspects of Sadat's speech, though not mentioned in Rabin's statement to the press, are believed to have been discussed at today's Cabinet meeting. The two points that Israeli officials were quick to express reservations over were precisely those that Sadat apparently regards as proof of his intentions to "pursue all possible opportunities for the settlement of the Mideast conflict." These were the three-month extension of the UNEF mandate and the re-opening of the Suez Canal.

Canal Re-opening A Test

The latter, while generally welcomed, was not regarded by Israeli officials as an Egyptian concession although it was a "de-escalating factor" after a week of tension, sources here said. Some political circles expressed the view, however, that if the canal is indeed re-opened without demands for further Israeli territorial withdrawals, it would indicate that Sadat has chosen "the path of diplomacy."

A third major point of Sadat's speech that has been given considerable attention here was his intimation that Egypt would return the bodies of Israeli soldiers killed in the Yom Kippur War and still listed as missing. "We have yet to hear if Egypt would attach conditions to this offer," sources here said.

Rabin himself did not refer directly to that

part of Sadat's speech. He noted, however, that throughout the course of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy Israel consistently raised the question of the missing soldiers both through Kissinger and through "other channels" which the Premier did not specify.

Whereas Sadat mentioned 39 bodies to be returned to Israel, according to Israeli information, 57 soldiers are still on the missing list. Therefore, Rabin said, Israel would continue its "unceasing effort" to achieve the return of all missing bodies. (See separate story.)

HOPE AROUSED THAT BODIES OF ISRAELI SOLDIERS KILLED IN YOM KIPPUR WAR MAY BE RETURNED By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, March 30 (JTA)--President Anwar Sadat's official disclosure last night of the existence of a common grave where 39 Israeli soldiers killed in the Yom Kippur War were buried, has aroused hope here that the bodies may be returned. There is also, however, a general wariness that the Egyptian President may intend to use the return of the bodies as a bargaining point for further Israeli concessions.

Sadat mentioned the mass grave in a speech to the Egyptian People's Assembly (Parliament) in which he also announced that Egypt would re-open the Suez Canal on June 5 and that it would agree to a three-month extension of the mandate of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Sinai, which expires next month. (See separate story.)

There were still 57 Israeli soldiers listed as missing in action on the Sinai front when the Egyptians, several months ago, called off the body search that was being conducted by the Israeli army's chaplaincy corps. Israeli requests to renew the search, conveyed through Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, brought no response from Cairo. But recently, Israeli and Egyptian officers meeting in the UN buffer zone pin-pointed the location of Israeli dead on maps of the Suez Canal zone.

Sadat's statement indicated that Egyptian soldiers had in fact recovered the remains of the Israelis and interred them in a mass grave--a practice that Israel would not have condoned. The fact that Sadat himself had ordered a halt to the earlier body search indicated that he intended to use the remains as a bargaining point in future negotiations for a political or military accord--knowing Israel's intense feelings over the return of its war dead. If the 39 bodies buried by the Egyptians are returned to Israel, there will still be 18 Israeli soldiers missing and unaccounted for on the Egyptian front.

JORDAN EMERGING AS FOCAL POINT OF RENEWED TERRORIST ACTIVITY

TEL AVIV, March 30 (JTA)--While Israel is keeping a watchful eye on the heavy troop concentrations by Syria and Egypt behind the disengagement lines, the Jordanian front is emerging as a focal point of renewed terrorist activity after three years of quiet.

Early this morning, terrorists on the east bank of the Jordan River opened fire on an Israeli patrol near Neveh Urr in the Belsan Valley. The fire was returned. No Israeli casualties were reported. Israeli security circles believe the terrorists were part of a gang that infiltrated into Jordan from Syria and managed to evade Jordanian troops. Last week, Jordanian forces intercepted a terrorist gang on its way back to Syria, killed its leader and wounded another man.

These incidents were the latest indication that Palestinian terrorists were once more seeking to

use Jordanian territory as a staging area for incursions into Israel. It was disclosed here Friday that Israeli forces captured a gang of four terrorists shortly after they had crossed the Jordan River north of Jericho.

The four men, displayed on television, admitted that they had entered Jordan from Syria and spent 18 hours dodging Jordanian army patrols. They crossed into Israel under cover of darkness and hid out in a cave but were detected and surrounded by Israeli forces. The four surrendered yielding four Kalashnikov rifles, a Russian-made pistol, ammunition, wire cutters and sabotage equipment.

SHALEV SAYS ISRAEL PREPARED TO TAKE CALCULATED RISKS IN ORDER TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA)--An Israeli official said last night that Israel has demonstrated that it is prepared to take calculated risks in order to move the Middle East toward peace. Mordechai Shalev, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, noted in that respect that in the recent negotiations conducted by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger for a second-stage Israeli-Egyptian agreement in Sinai, Israel was willing to make concrete territorial concessions in return for only verbal promises.

Addressing 1000 guests at the 43rd annual Third Seder of the Greater New York Histadrut Council at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Shalev said, "We are asking Egypt only for words. In return for a clear, albeit verbal unequivocal move toward peace, we shall be ready to relinquish the oil fields and the Sinai passes."

The Israeli diplomat expressed regret that Egypt rejected Israel's offer, thereby terminating the negotiations and said he hoped "that the government and the people of the United States will understand the position that Israel had to take." He said that Israel was grateful to the United States for its aid during the Yom Kippur War and its continued economic and military assistance. "It is inconceivable that there should be any change in American policy for keeping Israel strong," Shalev said.

Dr. Judah J. Shapiro, president of the National Committee for Labor Israel, presented an oral "Haggada" composed for the Third Seder. One of the highlights of the Third Seder was the introduction of one of the guests, Yair Ben Eliezer, grandson of the late Israeli Premier David Ben Gurion, who is in the U.S. in connection with the activities of the Israel Students Association of which he is secretary. Six candles commemorating the six million Jews who perished during the Nazi era were kindled by six members of the Labor Zionist Alliance who survived Nazi concentration camps.

700 SOVIET JEWS IN ROME ATTEND SEDERS ORGANIZED BY JDC AND ORT

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA)--Close to 2400 Soviet Jewish transmigrants in Rome waiting for arrangements to be completed to proceed to the United States and other Western countries, celebrated their first Passover holiday openly and in freedom it was reported by Jack D. Weller, chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee.

About 700 of the migrants attended seders organized by the JDC and the ORT. The first seder, for 300 people, was held at the Rome Jewish community kindergarten. The second, which was attended by about 400, took place in the gymnasium of the community's children's home. Dr. Vladimir Halperin of the Geneva staff of ORT,

who speaks Russian fluently, conducted both seders in the transmigrants' native language.

"For many of the Russian Jews it was the first time they had ever taken part in a seder," Weller said. "For them the age-old question 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' had a very special meaning. However, with organizations like the JDC, ORT and United Hias Service helping them, these Jews liberated from bondage will not have to wander across the desert for forty years seeking a homeland."

Weller, who also reported that a seder was conducted in Brussels in which several hundred Russian transmigrants took part, pointed out that the Soviet Jews now in Rome waiting to proceed to their final destination make up the overwhelming majority of the transmigrants going to countries other than Israel. To give those planning to immigrate to English-speaking countries a bit of a head start, ORT has organized English language classes.

Weller also reported that the JDC office in Rome distributed about 4000 pounds of matzos to the Soviet Jewish families to use during the week with meals prepared in the small hotels and furnished rooms where they are staying. He estimated that because of the growing number of Soviet Jews who, for family reunion or professional reasons, want to resettle in the U.S., the cost of caring for the transmigrants will reach \$4 million in 1975, about twice what it was in 1974. The program will be financed partially by United Jewish Appeal funds and largely by the United States Refugee Program.

ISRAEL FEELS GENEVA IS NEXT LOGICAL STEP IN MIDEAST PEACE EFFORTS

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA)--Mordechai Shalev, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, said today that his country believes that the Geneva conference is the next logical step in the Middle East peace efforts but also hopes that the step-by-step approach of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger would find expression through "other ways and means" as the time for the Geneva conference nears, despite the breakdown of Kissinger's most recent efforts.

Speaking at a press conference sponsored by Histadrut-National Committee for Labor Israel, Shalev reiterated Israel's intention to bar the Palestine Liberation Organization from the Geneva peace talks when they are resumed. Explaining that the admission of any new negotiating partner must have the unanimous consent of the original negotiating parties, he noted that "Israel is an original party and Israel will not consent to the admission of the PLO for to do so would be to make us part of a plan for our own self-destruction."

Shalev said Egypt was fully to blame for the failure of Kissinger's efforts to promote a second-stage agreement with Israel and charged that Cairo was trying to place responsibility on Israel to drive "a wedge between the U.S. and Israel. But that will not happen," the Israeli diplomat declared. "Despite the headlines, I see no basic changes in the U.S.-Israel relationship," he said, adding that "Mr. Kissinger confirmed this in his recent (last Wednesday) press conference when he stated that the U.S. remains committed to Israel's survival."

PARIS (JTA)--Kuwait has purchased one of the skyscraping towers in Paris' new business area, La Defense. The deal was closed secretly last week in a ceremony including Kuwait's Ambassador to Paris, after one month of negotiations.

