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FORD'S REMARKS ON MIDEAST VIEWED AS ALMOST AN INVITATION TO ARABS TO HARDEN THEIR POSITION; ENCOURAGE ARABS TO USE THEIR OIL WEAPON

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, April 22 (JTA)--President Ford's remarks on the Middle East last night were viewed by some observers here today as re-statement of the long muted American policy of "even-handedness" in the Arab-Israeli conflict and as almost an invitation to the Arabs to harden their position. They felt also that the President's reference to the inevitability of another oil embargo in the event of a new Middle East war clearly encouraged the Arabs to employ their oil weapon to force the U.S. to apply stronger pressure on Israel for territorial concessions.

The President made his remarks on the Middle East in the course of an hour-long interview in the Blue Room of the White House with three CBS reporters which was broadcast live on national television and radio.

Commenting on the President's statements, Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations said in New York today: "We are concerned lest the Arab governments misread and misinterpret the President's remarks as an invitation to harden their line, to re-institute the oil embargo and to adopt policies that will lead to still another Arab attempt at the military destruction of Israel.

"At the same time, we share the President's sentiments that progress toward peace in the Middle East must not be interrupted and that the good offices of the United States are essential for resuming the momentum toward peace that led to the first disengagement agreement."

No Official Reaction in Israel

(There was no official reaction in Israel today to Ford's remarks and political circles in Jerusalem were wary of comment. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon who returned from the U.S. only this morning made no reference to the Ford interview. Sources in Jerusalem said he may not have been aware of its contents and certainly had not had a chance to study its full text.)

(Unofficially, however, observers in Jerusalem were particularly disturbed by Ford's implication that any future meeting he may hold with Premier Yitzhak Rabin would be balanced by meetings with Arab leaders. They were also concerned over the President's deliberate speculation over a new Arab oil embargo and his non-committal attitude on possible future U.S. recognition of the PLO.)

The President told his interviewers--Walter Cronkite, Eric Sevareid and Bob Schieffer--that he would not make "any commitment" on a meeting with Rabin until "we are further along in our reassessment" of U.S. policy in the Middle East. He said, "If we meet with one" head of state, "we certainly ought to give others an opportunity to have the same in-put."

Indicates Caution in Reassessment

Asked by Cronkite if that meant "there won't be any favored nation treatment of Israel in the

future," the President replied. "I think we have to, in this very division, where the possibility of war is certainly a serious one, if you have a war, you are inevitably going to have an oil embargo--I think we have to be very cautious in our process of reassessment."

The President said that "prior to the suspension of the negotiations" between Egypt and Israel conducted last month by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, "our whole Middle Eastern policy... had been a very successful one" but "following the very serious disappointment," in the last negotiations, "we are committed, at least in principle, to going to Geneva."

Three Options Exist

Ford added that three "options" now exist. One is to resume the "suspended negotiations without making a commitment to go to Geneva." Another would be to "go to Geneva and try to get an overall settlement--which is a very complicated matter. People advocate it, however. But," he continued, "while you are going through this negotiation for an overall settlement, as a third option, you might have an interim negotiated settlement between two of the parties, such as Israel and Egypt."

While the President said, "We have not made any decision yet," it appeared to observers that the third option is the one the U.S. still hopes to achieve, prior to making firm diplomatic, military or economic commitments to Israel.

Ford disclosed that he met last week with Yale law professor Eugene Rostow, who was Undersecretary of State in the Johnson Administration and is advocating a Geneva approach. He also disclosed that Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph J. Sisco is leading the Mideast reassessment study. Ford gave no date for completion of the study, but it is understood that it was to be completed within 4-6 weeks after the Kissinger talks were suspended on March 22.

Other Points in Interview

Other points brought out in the interview were that the President does not "foresee" any reason for American military intervention in the Middle East and continues to "hope" that no need will arise for either the U.S. or the Soviet Union to have "peace-keeping responsibilities with their own forces" in the Middle East. The President said no date had been set for reconvening the Geneva conference and that a date early this summer was only speculation.

Ford said he makes his decisions on foreign affairs on the basis of option papers prepared by the National Security Council of which Kissinger is chairman. He praised Kissinger as the best Secretary of State he has known since he first became a member of Congress more than 20 years ago.

The President also stated in his interview that the "impasse" between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization "will be one of the most difficult things that will have to be worked out, if it is worked out at Geneva."

The gloomy reaction to Ford's Mideast statements here stemmed in part from the fact that they were made only a month after the President was reportedly angered at Israel for the failure of Kissinger's mission. Some observers thought the

President displayed an even colder outlook toward the Jewish State last night.

ALLON: THAW BEGUN IN U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONS; BUT CHILL REMAINS By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 22 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Yigal Allon indicated on his return from the U.S. today that a thawing process had begun in Israeli-American relations but that the chill which set in after the collapse of the interim talks conducted by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger last month is still felt.

Allon's week-long tour, criss-crossing the U.S. on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal, wound up yesterday with a three-hour meeting with Kissinger in Washington. Allon described the meeting as the beginning of a renewed dialogue which would be continued between the U.S. and Israel. He said that in retrospect he did not regret the visit, though he admitted to doubts before embarking on it.

Sources close to the Foreign Minister said they "hoped that the improvement in relations would be reflected not just in atmospheric" meaning that they anticipated movement in the suspended negotiations with Washington over new arms contracts.

But Allon put that speculation to rest when he said that while the flow of military hardware already contracted for was continuing at the agreed pace, no contracts have been signed yet on "certain elements that were promised." He seemed to be referring to negotiations for Israel's purchase of the new F-15 jet fighters and the "Lance" ground-to-ground missile. The negotiations were suspended during the Ford Administration's current reassessment of American Mideast policy.

Examined Future Options

Allon told reporters on his arrival that he and Kissinger had agreed not to divulge the details of their talk. He acknowledged that they could not avoid discussion--including some discussion that was "not easy"--over the failure of last month's Israeli-Egyptian negotiations. But, Allon said, the burden of his meeting with Kissinger was an examination of future options. He said he had expressed Israel's desire to keep up the diplomatic momentum and the view that there was still room for a settlement with Egypt. "All the options are open," Allon declared.

A source close to the Foreign Minister said Allon had detected no change in U.S. policy toward the PLO in his talks with Kissinger and that he had not raised the possibility of a meeting between President Ford and Premier Yitzhak Rabin.

Meeting With Jewish Leaders, Touching

Referring to his meetings with American Jewish leaders, in five regional meetings of the UJA, with Israel Bond Organization officials, and at his briefing of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Allon said the experience was deeply moving. He described his encounters with American Jewry as "both moving and encouraging" and said he had been able to explain in detail to the Jewish leadership groups Israel's position in the recent negotiations with Egypt for an interim Sinai accord. He said he found "total identity with Israel" among American Jews.

EBAN; U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDEAST HAS, ON THE WHOLE, BEEN SUCCESSFUL

NEW YORK, April 22 (JTA)--Former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban told a meeting of the

Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations at 515 Park Avenue this morning that on the whole, American policy in the Middle East has been successful. He suggested ways and means by which both the U.S. and Israel can keep it that way, including new proposals by Israel to avoid an imposed solution.

Eban told the American Jewish leaders that it was excessively optimistic to have believed that the bilateral Israeli-Egyptian talks conducted by Kissinger last month could succeed because Egypt was being asked to cancel a state of war for 50 kilometers and Israel was being asked to give up essential positions for something far less than peace.

The Israeli diplomat said the U.S. had overreacted to the collapse of the Kissinger talks. A personal and subjective element entered into the American reaction which was reflected in President Ford's "ouhilly remarks" last night on a CBS television interview, Eban observed. He said Kissinger still regarded the failure of his mission as a personal setback and holds Israel responsible, but the need now is to go beyond that.

Four Points For The Future

Eban offered four points for the future: Abandon the inquest into who was at fault and look to the future, not the past; do not give the American people a false picture of the so-called failure of American policy in the Middle East. In that connection, Eban observed that U.S. policy has been successful; its influence in the Arab world has increased; America has massively re-armed Israel; and even the collapse of the talks did not lead to war because foundations had been built.

Eban's third point recommended that the U.S. select its commitments to other nations on the basis of their viability; the recipient has to be a nation that will not squander its aid in futile corruption; the U.S. should act to defend nations, not civil wars and the aid has to have a feasible chance of success. He said Israel wants zero percent of the manpower and only a fraction of the dollars the U.S. poured into Vietnam.

Finally, Eban said Israel must present new ideas and a specific policy because diplomatic nature abhors a vacuum. He said that in the absence of Israeli proposals, the possibility of an imposed settlement increases with America proposing, if not imposing, a solution instead of continuing its mediation role.

Allon's Farewell To Jewish Leaders

Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon said before returning to Israel last night that the "resumption of the U.S.-Israeli dialogue has begun but it may be a long one." Allon spoke extemporaneously to 50 leaders of the Conference of Presidents in the El Al lounge at Kennedy Airport before boarding his plane for Tel Aviv. He expressed gratification over his three-hour long meeting with Kissinger and the fact that he and the Secretary agreed on the main point--the necessity to preserve the momentum toward peace in the Mideast.

Ending his cross-country tour on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal last Friday, Allon told more than 600 American Jewish leaders from eight eastern states, "I go back home with the true feeling that we are one." He added, in his statement to the UJA leaders meeting in New York: "Our togetherness means more than organizational unity... as long as we are together, we will live together."

KEREN HAYESOD-UJA ACHIEVEMENTS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 22 (JTA)--The Keren

Hayesod-United Israel Appeal raised \$182.3 million in the fiscal year April 1974-April 1975, its director-general Shmushon Yaacov Kreutner announced here yesterday. He said this represented a significant achievement in that the sum was more than half that raised during the previous year, which was the year of the Yom Kippur War emergency campaign.

In the 1968-69 year, by comparison, Keren Hayesod had managed to raise only between one-quarter and one-third of what it raised in the previous year, the year of the Six-Day War emergency campaign. During an emergency campaign occasioned by actual war or its immediate aftermath, Kreutner said, people give "as though they will never give again." Keren Hayesod-UIA operates in 70 countries and is the main fund-raising body for Israel outside of the U.S., where the United Jewish Appeal operates independently.

Asked to compare Keren Hayesod's results to those of the UJA, Kreutner stated that in the calendar year of 1974 Keren Hayesod's cash income was \$167.3 million while that of the UJA was \$222.5 million. He pointed out that some six million Jews live in the U.S. under UJA's ambit of operations, while only some 2.5 million Jews altogether live in the 70 countries in which the Keren Hayesod operates.

The Keren Hayesod estimate for the new fiscal year--April 1975-April 1976--was in the order of \$160 to \$180 million despite the recessionary economic situation still affecting most Western economies. Kreutner stressed that all of his figures were in terms of actual cash income.

Communities' Response To Appeals

Asked to grade Jewish communities in order of their response to Keren Hayesod fund-raising efforts, Kreutner noted that British Jewry had surpassed all estimates during the wartime appeal. Second in order of merit was South Africa, he said, followed by Switzerland (the German-speaking part), Canada, West Germany, Belgium, and Australia which had made great strides forward of late.

Kreutner said estimated operating expenses for Keren Hayesod in the coming year would be IL 24 million, only about two percent of estimated income. He stressed that Keren Hayesod fund-raising was based on the work of local leadership which was aided and guided by the head office in Jerusalem. In at least two centers, Antwerp and German-speaking Switzerland, there were virtually no overheads, all the work being done voluntarily.

Kreutner said Keren Hayesod asked its fund-raisers, whether professionals, Israeli dignitaries or local lay leaders, to stress the true situation in Israel, neither whitewashing the real picture nor painting it in exaggeratedly gloomy colors. If aliyah was down--as it is at present--the Keren Hayesod campaigning centered on Israel's pressing social, health and educational needs which the government, overburdened by defense expenditure, could not meet alone.

Praise For 'Study Mission' Program

Kreutner had warm words of praise for the success of the Keren Hayesod "study mission" program which brings parties of overseas Jews to Israel for short and intensive study tours to familiarize them at first hand with the country's problems. During the 1974-75 year, there were 55 such missions, 19 from Britain, nine from Canada, and seven from France and the rest from other communities. Participants made their pledges on the spot, and when they returned home

became active in drawing pledges from others.

Kreutner said that modern fund-raising required efficient professional techniques. Keren Hayesod therefore held study days throughout the world during the past year at which lay and professional fund-raisers studied "the psychology of face-to-face fund-raising" with Prof. Arye Neuber of the Haifa University psychology department. Kreutner also underlined Keren Hayesod's efforts to attract young professionals and businessmen into its "young-leadership" cadres and its work to set up separate women's sections alongside all the major campaigns.

He said that in some outlying Jewish communities, such as the Caribbean or Rhodesia, Keren Hayesod comprised virtually the sole consistent year-round Jewish activity which embraced most of the Jewish populace.

ROBERT ARON DEAD AT 70

PARIS, April 22 (JTA)--French Jewish author and historian, Robert Aron, died of a heart attack at the age of 70 in his Paris home on Saturday. The historian was to have been received into the prestigious French Academy on April 24. He had received his ceremonial sword last Tuesday.

Aron was known for his historical works concerning France under the German occupation and during the liberation by the Allies. He was a winner of the Femina-Vicqresco Prize in 1961, and had been honored with two decorations--the French Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre.

Mr. Aron was cheerful and in apparent good health when he received his sword last week, and had told friends that he was planning to write his memoirs. Paris newspapers today mourned the disappearance of the future member of the Academy and characterized him as one of the most remarkable writers whose life and works will remain an example and his memory not be forgotten.

SEMINAR IN MADRID ATTENDED BY ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIANS

TEL AVIV, April 22 (JTA)--A recent seminar in Madrid attended by Israeli scholars and intellectuals was described here today as an important development in the field of Jewish-Christian relations. The week-long gathering was devoted to the subject of human beings in Biblical thought and in Jewish and Christian philosophy and theology.

It was sponsored by the Center of Jewish-Christian Studies of Madrid and the Israel Interfaith Committee. Its value to Jewish-Christian relations was expressed by Dr. Nathan Lerner, director of the Israel branch of the World Jewish Congress and coordinator of the Interfaith Committee's special branch for Spanish-speaking countries.

Israeli participants included Zvi Werblowsky, David Flusser, Dr. Andrei Chouraqui, Dr. Pablo Eguigure and Knesset Secretary Nathan Lorch. On the Spanish side were Prof. Alejandro Diaz Macho, philosopher-author Julian Marias, Prof. Francisco J. Florez-Tascon, Prof. David Gonzolo Maeso and Prof. Jose Lopez Ibor.

The seminar was coordinated by Father Vincente Serrano, head of the Jewish-Christian Studies Center. Teachers and students of the Madrid diocesan seminar and of the Pontifical University of Comillas attended and participated in the lectures and discussions. The seminar itself took place at the center, the university and the Jewish community building. * * *

BONN (JTA)--Bremen friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem intend to collect money for those Israeli students who were wounded in the last war.

