

KNESSET OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVES BEGIN'S INVITATION TO SADAT

By Gil Sedan and Yitzhak Shargil

JERUSALEM, Nov. 15 (JTA)—The Knesset today overwhelmingly approved Premier Menachem Begin's invitation to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat who has said he would come to Jerusalem if officially invited. The invitation, which Begin gave to U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis this evening for conveyance to Sadat through the American Embassy in Cairo, was welcomed with enthusiasm by virtually all members. (See related story for reaction from Washington.)

Former Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, speaking for the Opposition-Labor Alignment, told the packed chamber that the Knesset was united in support of the invitation to Sadat. Arye Eliav, leader of the Sheli faction, a bitter opponent of the Likud government, declared, "Today I have an opportunity to praise the Premier for his impressive and quick response to the dramatic gesture of President Anwar Sadat." Only the three-member Rakah Communist faction abstained in the vote.

The Knesset appeared unperturbed by a warning by Chief of Staff Gen. Mordechai Gur, published in Yediot Achronot today, that Sadat's offer to visit Israel may be a smokescreen to cover Egyptian preparations for war.

Dramatic Turn In Conflict Seen

The rapid events of the past few days have heightened the possibility of a dramatic turn in the 30-year-old Middle East conflict and Israelis have begun to prepare seriously for the first visit by the head of an Arab state to the Jewish State. Sadat told CBS television last night that he was ready to go to Jerusalem to address the Knesset on short notice if he received a proper invitation.

Begin responded immediately, also in a CBS interview, that he would ask Lewis to transmit the formal invitation because there are no direct diplomatic channels between Israel and Egypt. The impression here tonight was that Sadat may come to Jerusalem as early as next week. Begin told CBS that if necessary he would postpone his visit to Britain scheduled for next week.

Ready To Invite Assad, Hussein, Sarkis

He repeated that tonight during a ceremonial presentation of the invitation to Lewis before television cameras in the secretariate room of the Knesset. He said he was ready to extend similar invitations to President Hafez Assad of Syria, King Hussein of Jordan and President Elias Sarkis of Lebanon. Israel's invitation is not an attempt to divide the Arab states, Begin told reporters. Its only purpose is to hold talks that would eventually lead to peace, he affirmed.

Begin added that Israel was also ready to talk to the "true and authorized spokesmen of the Arabs of Eretz Israel." He stressed that he and Sadat agreed that the latter's visit would take place with no preconditions, no threats. "We do not threaten Egypt and we ask that Egypt does not threaten us," he said, adding that "we do not have an alternative to peace."

Begin said that if Sadat accepts the invita-

tion, "he will be received with the appropriate honor that suits the head of a neighboring state with which we want to live in peace." He said he would greet the Egyptian President at Ben Gurion Airport, would invite him to join him in his car and they would exchange mutual ideas on the drive to Jerusalem.

"Sadat could speak Arabic and I can speak Hebrew with a translator but we could also speak English," Begin said. He stated that he would introduce Sadat to the Knesset and allow him to address it. The Premier said that as soon as an affirmative response was received from Cairo he would ask the Knesset House Committee to allow the Egyptian leader to use the podium. Begin disclosed in the Knesset that he wrote to President Carter today informing him of the recent developments and thanking him for the good offices of the U.S. ambassadors in Tel Aviv and Cairo.

Allon Sees Arab Awakening

Speaking for the opposition in the Knesset, Allon said the latest developments represented "a real turning point" in the Middle East conflict. He said Sadat would have to explain why a few years ago he said he was ready to sacrifice a million Egyptian soldiers in war with Israel and now he is ready to come to Jerusalem to prevent the death of even one soldier. "Perhaps this is the beginning of the Arab awakening," Allon said.

"Perhaps the President and with him the other Arab leaders are beginning to understand that there is no military solution to the Mideast conflict, that none of the parties can impose the conditions of peace on the other party and that there is no alternative to negotiations and to the political means."

Authorities at Ben Gurion Airport said today that they could be ready on 48 hours notice to receive Sadat's plane. The King David Hotel, one of Jerusalem's oldest and most prestigious hostels, said it could prepare the Royal Suite in 24 hours. According to one report, flag-makers have received orders from the government to manufacture Egyptian flags.

Warning Issued By Gur

But there was still wide-spread skepticism that the visit will indeed materialize. Feelings persisted in some quarters that Sadat was engaged in an elaborate propaganda ploy to exploit sentiments for peace.

Today, Yediot Achronot headlined a warning by Chief of Staff Gen. Mordechai Gur that Sadat's offer to come to Israel may be a smokescreen to cover accelerated war preparations by Egypt's armed forces aimed at a surprise attack similar to the one that launched the Yom Kippur War in October, 1973. Gur's remarks to the paper were made over the week-end. Their publication today was perceived in some quarters as a deliberate attempt to throw cold water on the prospects of a Sadat-Begin meeting in Jerusalem.

Begin indicated that he had not been consulted by Gur although a statement of that kind requires authorization at the highest political level. Defense Minister Ezer Weizman denied categorically that he had been consulted on the contents or timing of the statement. Gur claimed that in recent months there

has been a significant escalation in the scope of military exercises by Egypt's armed forces, a strengthening of those forces and other preparations for war. He said that Egyptian army units and war materiel mobilized against Libya could be turned against Israel. Moreover, the Egyptian army is now conducting large-scale war games and military exercises, just as it did on the eve of the Yom Kippur War.

U.S. TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY PENDING ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN SUMMIT MEETING

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15 (JTA)—The United States admitted today that it was surprised by the sudden probability of an Israeli-Egyptian summit meeting in Jerusalem without its influence and sought to characterize the dramatic change in Middle East diplomacy as merely a step toward reconvening the Geneva conference which the Carter Administration has been urging all along.

The State Department's chief spokesman, Assistant Secretary of State Hodding Carter, stressed repeatedly during his press briefing today that the Geneva conference was the objective of the possible new diplomatic moves and that resolution of the Middle East conflict required an overall settlement.

He said that "both parties"—Egypt and Israel—"said they are still committed to a Geneva conference" and that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat "put it in the context of a speedy resolution of procedural matters that should not be allowed to block Geneva." The possible Jerusalem meeting between Sadat and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin "represents a moving along to Geneva," Carter said.

He also admitted freely that the U.S. was taken unawares by the developments of the past few days. "We were not ahead of events," Carter said. He said the possible Jerusalem meeting was "an initiative the two leaders took themselves" and the U.S. had "no information" and there was "no consultations with the U.S. on this kind of visit." He said that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has had "no direct contacts" with either Sadat or Begin in the last few days.

The State Department's acknowledgment that it was surprised by the latest initiatives was seen in some circles as an indication that the U.S. does not wish either the Soviet Union or Syria to consider that they were being hoodwinked in the U.S. efforts for a Mideast settlement.

The Stakes Involved

While continuing to say that it "welcomes" the idea of a Sadat visit to Jerusalem and to praise Sadat and Begin for their "contributions" to a settlement, Washington made it clear that Sadat's visit and its possible consequences are not what it has planned.

At stake is the possibility of a separate Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement that would undercut U.S. moves with Soviet collaboration toward an overall settlement at Geneva with the purpose of settling the Palestinian question and sovereignty over the West Bank and the Golan Heights. A bilateral agreement between Israel and Egypt would sidestep those issues for the time being while ending hostilities between those countries.

The State Department indicated its coolness with diplomatic tact. Carter described the U.S. views without making it an "announcement." He preceded his remarks on the Middle East with the announcement of a forthcoming election in Bolivia

and Vance's trip to Latin America for "several days" beginning Sunday. This raised the possibility that Vance would be away from Washington when Sadat would be making his visit to Jerusalem.

Will Facilitate Contacts

Carter told reporters: "As we said yesterday, we welcome such a visit as a concrete contribution by the leaders involved to moving forward negotiations for an overall settlement of the Middle East conflict. We believe the recent exchange between President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin of Israel underline their sincerity of purpose in seeking to put an end to three decades of strife."

"For our part, we will do anything necessary to facilitate contacts which we have always considered essential if the parties to the dispute are to settle their differences themselves at the Geneva conference. We believe these exchanges are helpful in the continuing efforts by all parties to the conflict to reconvene that conference as soon as possible." Carter said that Begin's invitation to Sadat will be relayed by the U.S. through the U.S. Embassy in Cairo "with greatest of pleasure."

COCA-COLA AIDS EGYPTIAN PROJECT

By David Friedman

NEW YORK, Nov. 15 (JTA)—The Coca-Cola Company will provide the \$340,000 to \$400,000 needed to cover the expenses for the first two years of a Brooklyn Museum project to conserve and record the monuments of ancient Thebes in Egypt, it was announced today.

But Sam Ayoub, president of Coca-Cola's Middle East group, denied to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the involvement of the Atlanta, Georgia-based firm was an effort to get Egypt to help get Coca-Cola off the Arab boycott list.

Ayoub, who is also a vice-president of the parent Coca-Cola Company, said that he signed an agreement in Egypt in September to develop 15,000 acres of orange groves in Egypt which the soft drink company hopes will lead to its removal from the boycott list. He said this was done before Coca-Cola was approached about the Brooklyn Museum project, which he said his company was contributing to only for "humanitarian" reasons.

Ayoub's statements to the JTA came after the project, called the Theban Expedition, was announced at a press conference at the museum. The Coca-Cola official told the conference his company hoped that projects such as this would help "bring the world closer together." Dr. Lillian Berkman, chairman of the International Advisory Committee for the project, said Coca-Cola was approached because a sponsor was needed and she was familiar with the company's recent efforts in mounting an exhibition of Japanese art.

John Q. Blodgett, of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, said the project "represented another joint venture between Egypt and the United States." He noted that the U.S. was now working with Egypt in seeking a Middle East peace but that 200 years from now, the Theban Expedition might be viewed as of "equal importance."

Michael Botwinick, the Brooklyn Museum's director, said the project will involve the conservation and recording of the monuments in the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile, many of which are in danger of collapsing, and continuing excavations on the east bank of the Nile near the major tourist city of Luxor.

UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA REFUSES TO ENDORSE MERCAZ AS EXPRESSING CONSERVATIVE VIEW IN ZIONIST MOVEMENT

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y., Nov. 15 (JTA)—The United Synagogue of America, the congregational arm of Conservative Judaism, refused today to endorse "Mercatz," a Zionist organization recently founded to express the aims of the Conservative movement within the Zionist movement in America.

The biennial convention, attended by 2000 delegates from 830 congregations in the United States and Canada, after a long and bitter debate, removed the question from consideration by voting overwhelmingly to table a resolution which would have endorsed the organization.

The resolution did not mention the organization, Mercatz (Center, in Hebrew), by name which has already been formed and which has Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz of Washington, president of the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), the association of Conservative rabbis, as pro-tem chairman, and Rabbi Bernard Raskas of St. Paul, as pro-tem chairman of the governing council.

Mercatz is an acronym for the "Movement for the Reaffirmation of Conservative Zionism." Raskas, who participated in the debate, and Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, RA executive vice-president, declared that the United Synagogue's action would not halt the new organization.

Both men declared that Mercatz does not depend either on the endorsement of the United Synagogue, the RA or any other element of the Conservative movement. Membership in Mercatz is on an individual basis of adherence to Conservative Judaism, it was explained. The two rabbis said that the organization, which was launched at the RA convention at Grossingers last March, already has more than 1000 members and a budget and that it hopes to have a founding convention shortly.

Lengthy Debate On Mercatz Issue

The formal debate, which took up all of Monday evening and which preceded statements from the floor and final action on the floor today, had Dr. Robert Gordis, professor of Bible and of the Philosophies of Religion at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), the Conservative school, arguing for endorsement of Mercatz, and Jacob Stein, former United Synagogue president, against.

Gordis assailed the Orthodox establishment in Israel, and the politics which he said keeps it in power and listed the disabilities of the Conservative movement and other non-Orthodox religious bodies in Israel.

If Mercatz can only help "guarantee freedom and equality for Conservative Jewry in Israel, if it can create a climate for all in the land," it would be enough, Gordis declared. "There is freedom of religion for everyone in Israel but the Jews," he charged.

Stein ridiculed Mercatz as a "club" formed by a small group of rabbis. "Why another Zionist club" with a budget and a bureaucracy to be added to the already existing Zionist organizations in the United States?" he asked. "Why should we participate in a declaration of war against our neighbors?" He was referring to the Zionist Organization of America, to which he has belonged for the past 35 years, and to Hadassah, of which his wife is a life member.

The convention was preceded by the designation by Dr. Gerson Cohen, JTS chancellor, of a

12-member commission, made in fulfillment of his pledge last spring, to study the role and status of women in American Judaism—with particular reference to the possibility of ordination as Conservative rabbis.

Commission On The Status Of Women

Cohen named the Commission for the Study of Women in the Rabbinate in response to a resolution approved by the RA at its convention last spring asking him "to establish an interdisciplinary commission to study all aspects of the role of women as spiritual leaders in the Conservative movement."

The resolution also requested the study commission to present a progress report at the executive council of the RA next spring and a final report and recommendations at the 1979 RA convention. Rabbi Cohen, a RA member, is chairman of the study commission, which includes nine men and three women in a variety of scholarly and professional fields. Other than himself, there are no official representatives of any affiliates of the Conservative movement.

Cohen said that if the commission recommends admitting women to the rabbinical school of the JTS, he would transmit that recommendation to the faculty and would also recommend admission of ordained women to the RA. He said the final decision, regardless of commission recommendations, would have to be made by the congregations, which will have to decide on whether they want women rabbis.

PLO LEADER HOLDS TALKS WITH TOP WEST GERMAN OFFICIALS

By Jon Fedler

BONN, Nov. 15 (JTA)—A Palestine Liberation Organization leader said to be responsible for a 1970 attack on an El Al plane at Munich in which one person died and nine were wounded, held a meeting here last week with former Chancellor Willy Brandt, who is presently chairman of the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD), Egon Bahr, SPD organizing secretary, and Hans-Juergen Wischniewski, Under-Secretary of State, according to the German daily, "Welt."

The PLO guest was Isam A. Sartawi, described as PLO "Special Ambassador." This is the second time in recent months that PLO representatives have been received in Bonn despite official assurances that Bonn does not recognize the organization and will not do so until it renounces its aims of destroying Israel. According to an informed source the Israeli Embassy here is "trying to find out more details."

ANTI-BEGIN CAMPAIGN MOUNTED

LONDON, Nov. 15 (JTA)—The pro-Arab lobby here is mounting a campaign of character assassination against Menachem Begin to coincide with the Israeli Premier's scheduled visit here next week. Its climax will be a public meeting in the Central Hall, Westminster, on Nov. 21 to be addressed by Christopher Mayhew and Sir Anthony Nutting. The theme of the meeting, organized by the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU), is being billed as "A Homeland for the Palestinians—Britain's Message to Begin." However, the flavor of the meeting can be gauged from a pamphlet which CAABU is circulating to politicians and the media. Entitled "Who is Menachem Begin?" it dwells heavily on his role as commander of the Irgun Zvai Leumi.

KISSINGER SAYS CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS NOT OUT TO RISK ISRAEL'S SECURITY

NEW YORK, Nov. 15 (JTA)—Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said here that while "the Carter Administration would not deliberately put Israel's security at risk," Israel must be left "strong enough to protect its future by its own efforts." He declared that "Israel has never rejected a chance to make progress towards a settlement, or to run the risks for peace." He added that "a just peace cannot be an imposed peace" and that "coordination of policies between Israel and the United States" is "imperative."

These were the highlights of Kissinger's address to 500 leaders of the American Jewish Congress at a dinner Sunday night at the Plaza Hotel where he presented the Stephen Wise Award of the AJCongress to former Israeli Premier Golda Meir. Another Stephen Wise medallion was awarded to Mayor Abraham Beame. Sen. Jacob Javits (R.N.Y.) served as dinner chairman.

Referring to the proposed Geneva peace conference, Kissinger warned: "We must not give a veto to the most intransigent elements within the area. We must not permit outside powers to emerge as the advocates for a point of view that penalizes moderation." He emphasized the "enormous complexity" of an "overall solution" among "parties with an unequal commitment to peace."

In this regard, Kissinger declared: "A just peace must be a peace which the participants accept and feel a stake in preserving. And therefore the process by which peace is made is almost as important as the final outcome. At each stage the parties must feel that it was their decision and not somebody else's that brought about the result."

Kissinger asserted that "the intentions or purposes of the government of the United States cannot be at issue. No President would knowingly risk the future of Israel. Nor would he make a deal to undermine Israel's future for some global consideration."

Israel Cannot Experiment

He stated that his acquaintance with President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and their senior advisors "convinces me that this Administration would not deliberately put Israel's security at risk. But there is always the danger that actions undertaken in good faith may inadvertently produce unforeseen consequences. If such a miscalculation took place either Israel would become totally isolated or diplomacy would become abruptly deadlocked." Therefore, he added, a coordination of policies between Israel and the U.S. is "imperative."

The U.S., Kissinger observed, can survive trial-and-error diplomacy, "because we can always rectify mistakes by redoubling our efforts. But Israeli leaders cannot experiment; they have only one try. If they guess wrong they risk the survival of the nation."

Kissinger also stated that a Palestinian state on the West Bank "is bound to be an element of instability both for Jordan and for Israel; it will compound the crisis not solve it." He noted that "it cannot be an accident that no attempt to create such a state was ever made during the 20 years of Arab rule in that territory."

4 ISRAELI ARABS GO TO MECCA; FIRST SUCH PILGRIMAGE BY ISRAELI CITIZENS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 15 (JTA)—Four Israeli Arab Moslems left for Mecca, Saudi Arabia today

on what was the first pilgrimage by citizens of Israel to the holiest shrine of Islam. The four—three Kadis (religious judges) and the director of Moslem broadcasts of the Israel Broadcasting Authority—comprised a delegation rather than a pilgrimage. They are expected to discuss with the Saudi authorities arrangements for a mass pilgrimage of Israeli Arabs to Mecca next year.

Their journey culminated months of negotiations in which the Jordanian government served as intermediary between the representatives of Israel's Moslem community and the Saudis. Saudi Arabia heretofore has refused to admit any citizens of Israel to its territory regardless of their faith. Permission was granted finally only last week, too late to organize a large-scale pilgrimage because the traditional pilgrimage season will soon end.

According to Dr. Moshe Sharon, Premier Menachem Begin's advisor on Arab affairs, the Saudis wanted to appear to be liberalizing their policy but dragged their feet to make sure that no mass pilgrimage from Israel will occur this year. But Yisrael Lippel, director general of the Religious Affairs Ministry, who escorted the four Moslems to the Allenby Bridge today, said he hoped their trip would mark the opening of Saudi Arabia to Israeli Arabs and indeed the entire Arab world to visits by Jewish tourists from Israel.

The delegates are traveling to Saudi Arabia via Jordan on laissez passer issued by Israel. They were issued temporary Jordanian passports in order to enter Saudi Arabia because the Saudis will not admit bearers of Israeli passports. The group was driven to Amman to board a plane for Jeddah. They are expected to return to Israel in 10 days.

One potential member of the delegation remained behind. Dr. Subhi Abu Gosh, an official of the Religious Affairs Ministry, complained that the government financed only half the expenses of the trip. He said the government should have paid the full cost from money raised by Moslem trust property it holds. The government said that according to Moslem law, a pilgrim must pay his own way to Mecca.

SEVERAL FORMER SS OFFICERS BELIEVED TO HAVE SLIPPED INTO GREAT BRITAIN

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Nov. 15 (JTA)—A number of former SS officers are believed to have slipped into Britain to attend the publication of the English version of a book which whitewashes the role of the SS in World War II. Despite attempts to deny their entry, the former Nazis are thought to have arrived in Britain, possibly through the Irish Republic. One of them is former Nazi chief Manfred Roeder.

The book, to be published Thursday, is a glossy 590-page pictorial anthology intended to depict the SS as gallant front-line fighters rather than the more familiar image of sadistic concentration camp guards.

Dr. Jacob Gewirtz, defense secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said that the SS book is being published by the people who were responsible for the pamphlet "Did Six Million Really Die?" which portrays the Holocaust as a post-war myth fomented by world Jewry. The aim of all such books was Jew-baiting, he said.

NEW YORK (JTA)—The National Conference on Soviet Jewry has learned that Soviet Jewish Prisoner of Conscience Alexander Silnitsky was released from prison the end of October.