

BEGIN WELCOMES VANCE'S MIDEAST TRIP

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Dec. 6 (JTA)—Israeli Premier Menachem Begin said here last night that he welcomed U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's visit to the Middle East beginning Friday with the hope that he will be able to convince all of Israel's Arab neighbors to join the peace-making process now entered into by Israel and Egypt. He said he did not rejoice over the bitter split in Arab ranks over Egypt's peace initiative because Israel wanted treaties with all its neighbors "in the south, the east and the north."

"The road to peace is open and we shall keep it open," he told Anglo-Jewish leaders at a fund-raising dinner of the Joint Israel Appeal. But he was adamant on the issue of a Palestinian state. He said such a state in Judea and Samaria would be a mortal danger to Israel. "Of course," he added, "there are Palestinian Arabs as we are Palestinian Jews and there is a problem which we want to solve decently and with human dignity."

Begin said he had faith in Egypt's desire for peace. He noted that Egypt, which must feed 900,000 more mouths every year, needs peace. It would be "arrogant" to talk of Israel helping Egypt solve its internal problems, he said, but "we must help each other." He urged more Jewish aid to Israel, noting that 300,000 Israelis live in object conditions below the poverty line.

Begin cancelled all of his appointments this morning because of stomach pains diagnosed as possible food poisoning. His personal physician, Dr. Basil Lewis, a cardiologist from Hadassah Hospital, said it had nothing to do with his heart ailment. After an examination he said Begin's cardiac condition was "pretty good." However, the Premier was not able to attend a reception tonight in his honor given by Herut. He also had to cancel engagements with members of Parliament and with John Davies, the opposition spokesman on foreign affairs.

EGYPT'S BREAK WITH 5 ARAB STATES SEEN AS POSITIVE EFFECT ON CAIRO TALKS

By Yitzhak Sharqil

TEL AVIV, Dec. 6 (JTA)—Israeli journalists in Cairo reported today that Egypt's diplomatic break with the five Arab states opposed to President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative could have a positive effect on the upcoming Cairo conference but will complicate the task of U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who begins a Middle East visit Friday. (See related story from Washington.)

According to journalists, Sadat's prompt decision to sever relations with Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen indicated that the Egyptian leader is prepared to go all the way to reach a settlement with Israel, possibly even a bilateral agreement. They said that diplomatic observers in Cairo believe, however, that the door remains open to heal the rift between Egypt and Syria. Egyptian officials are waiting for the results of the talks now taking place in Damascus between President Hafez Assad and King Hussein of Jordan and are hopeful that Syria may yet have second thoughts.

But sources in Cairo believe that in the pres-

ent atmosphere in the Arab world, Vance will have a difficult time persuading the Syrians to change their minds about the Cairo conference or getting the opposition bloc to tone down its criticism.

VANCE SAYS HIS MIDEAST TRIP IS TO AID PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN ISRAEL, ARABS

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6 (JTA)—Secretary of State Cyrus Vance said today that the conversations between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin have begun an "irreversible process" towards a Middle East settlement. He said his own upcoming visit to the area is to seek to bring other nations into this process.

Announcing that Syria has now "welcomed" him to visit Damascus on his journey to Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, Vance said "our proper role is to support and reinforce" those "crosscurrents" moving toward bringing Arab and Israeli positions closer together "while using our relationship across the spectrum to moderate" those that are pulling those positions wider apart. "I will be seeking to do both on my visit to the area," he said at a news conference at the State Department.

Strongly supporting the Cairo conference which will begin about Dec. 14, Vance said "we intend to help" Sadat and Begin "wherever possible to enlarge" the opening they have made toward the settlement. The Secretary's statements came while reports from the Middle East predicted that Egypt would follow its break in relations with five Arab countries, including Syria, by severing ties with the Soviet Union.

Critical Of Soviet Union

A reporter asked Vance whether the visit to Moscow by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Philip Habib was to tell the Soviet Union that it was not as constructive as the United States would like it to be in view of the strong Soviet support for Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization which have attacked Egypt and joined in a confrontation alliance at Tripoli, Libya against Sadat.

"Insofar as the Soviet Union is concerned," Vance said, "they have responsibilities as co-chairman" of the Geneva conference. "Some Soviet statements in recent days have not been helpful. They raise questions" about their "ultimate objectives" in the Mideast. But Vance added, the U.S. still believes that the Soviets want a comprehensive settlement.

He said that Habib, who had been in Moscow since Saturday meeting with Soviet Middle East specialists, will report to him in Brussels. Vance leaves tonight for Belgium for the NATO winter meeting before going to the Mideast.

Reaffirms Support Of Cairo Talks

Vance denounced a reporter's suggestion that U.S. enthusiasm for the Sadat-Begin talks was late and that the U.S. reassessment of policy now made it conceivable that a settlement can be made without Geneva. "As soon as the statement on the Cairo conference was made we indicated" that the U.S. would play a helpful role but it wanted to consult with the parties first, Vance said.

"We support very strongly this initiative," Vance said. "We believe Cairo is a stepping stone toward

peace." He conceded "it is possible" that a settlement could be made without Geneva, "but all of the parties have said it is their intention to move toward a Geneva conference." But first, Vance said, it is necessary to see what will be accomplished at Cairo. "I hope much can be accomplished," he added.

Asked whether Syria is receptive to his visit to the Mideast, he pointed out that the "Syrians have never said they have closed the door to Geneva discussions." He said "we have always strived for the objective of bringing the parties face-to-face—as did our predecessors—and worked for the parties to negotiate." In this connection, he expressed the hope that "the circle of face-to-face negotiations" that started between Israel and Egypt "will be widened to include the others."

Continually referring to his twin objectives of supporting Egypt and Israel while trying to induce the opposition Arab states and the Soviet Union to join them, Vance pointed out that there are "no time limits" to the Cairo meeting and that the parties have said the Cairo meeting is "preparatory toward the Geneva conference."

Future Role Of U.S.

The future role of the U.S., he said, is "to facilitate direct talks." Vance said that "both the President and I feel there is no substitute for face-to-face conversation, direct talks with the leaders of the various nations involved. This is particularly important at this time when there is a blockage of communications between various leaders and perhaps we can play a facilitative role by keeping those channels of communications open."

The Secretary indicated that the U.S. may again enter into a mediator's role "if the parties ran into roadblocks, as the President has indicated, and new initiatives are helpful, we may come up with suggestions of our own," he said.

Speaking of Egypt's break with the five Arab states, Vance said "it is too bad that President Sadat was forced to break relations with the five Arab nations. It is our hope those differences may be healed, particularly insofar as Syria is concerned. Our hope is that all the parties—the confrontation states—will keep the channels open so that there may be movement toward an ultimate settlement."

Will Not Deal With PLO

Vance said he does not intend to "deal" with the Palestine Liberation Organization as a result of the commitment the U.S. made to Israel in the 1975 Sinai agreement. He said the Palestinian issue must be solved "but that is up to the parties" and he would not "prejudge what the parties may offer."

After pointing out that the Sadat visit to Israel has removed the "psychological stumbling-block" in the political process toward a Mideast settlement, Vance concluded with the hope that "out of Cairo it might be possible to come up with a framework of substantive matters for a comprehensive settlement and that procedural questions might be cleared away."

White House Deputy Presidential News Secretary, Rex Granum said yesterday that Vance's Mideast trip was decided upon a week ago at a meeting with President Carter, Vice President Walter Mondale, Vance, and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. Granum stressed that the President has no plans to visit any Mideast country other than Saudi Arabia when he goes abroad late this month.

TEKOAH URGES WORLD JEWRY TO HELP SOLVE PROBLEM OF ISRAEL'S SOCIAL GAP By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Dec. 6 (JTA)—Yosef Tekoah, president of Ben Gurion University in the Negev and former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, called last night for a concerted effort of world Jewry to solve the problem of the social gap in Israel which primarily affects Jews of Sephardi origin.

"The Israeli government alone cannot shoulder the fiscal burden of solving this problem," Tekoah told more than 250 leaders of the American Sephardi community, Zionist leaders and Israeli officials who attended a dinner in honor of World Sephardi Federation president Nessim Gaon of Geneva, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel here. The event was sponsored by the American Sephardi Federation and the American Associates of Ben Gurion University.

Noting that equal opportunities for "good education" are instrumental for closing the social gap in Israel, Tekoah said that Ben Gurion University, which he described as the "Sephardi University" of Israel, has set the advancement of Sephardi students as one of its major goals. He itemized the priorities which the university gives to Sephardi studies, Sephardi students and the Sephardi community which comprises a majority in Israel and said that the university has the largest number of Sephardi students of any other university in Israel.

Gaon, who is also chairman of the Board of the Ben Gurion University, cited the urgency of eliminating the social gap in Israel and warned that "this scourge (of social inequality) can be catastrophic in the event that security becomes a secondary preoccupation" in Israel.

The government of Menachem Begin, Gaon said, "is the first Israeli government which is determined to settle this problem." He pointed out that Begin had dispatched Minister of Social Betterment Israel Katz (who was present at the dinner) and Environment Minister Gideon Patt to the United States in order to rally United Jewish Appeal and United Israel Appeal leaders behind these efforts. He noted that all the leaders present had pledged their commitment to these efforts so that "Israel might simultaneously experience the miracles of peace and of equality."

Rescuing Sacred Objects

At a session of the World Sephardi Federation (WSF) Presidium which concluded its three-day conference today at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Dr. Solomon Gaon, chairman of the WSF education committee and former Chief Rabbi of Britain, reported on recent efforts to retrieve and rescue important documents, sacred objects, and libraries which have remained behind in the once flourishing Sephardi communities in Communist Europe, the Arab countries and elsewhere.

"Over 200 Torah scrolls," he reported, "have thus far been rescued and re-distributed for use by Sephardi communities in the United States, Canada, Israel, England and Latin America. Many of these scrolls have come from Egypt and Morocco and a year ago 10 Torahs were obtained through the Iraqi embassy in London."

"Where a declining Jewish community still exists," contacts should be made with the communal leaders to arrange for the orderly transfer of these items to Israel. "Where a Jewish community no longer exists, he called on the WSF to allocate special funds so that emissaries might

visit these countries and trace whatever available remaining items there might be.

SADAT'S VISIT HAD IMPACT ON CABINET

By Uzi Benziman

JERUSALEM, Dec. 6 (JTA)--Israel, so far, has withheld any public commitment to a change of policy on territorial issues and the Palestinian question that could be regarded as a reciprocation of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative.

But Sadat's visit to Jerusalem had a profound emotional effect on members of Premier Menachem Begin's coalition Cabinet. Private and public remarks by key ministers, both moderates and those known as hard-liners, indicate that they believe the Egyptian leader's desire for a peace settlement is sincere and that Israel must not miss the opportunity.

Several Cabinet members have expressed remarkably moderate concepts on the future of the occupied territories in off-the-record briefings. The four members of the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) headed by Deputy Premier Yigael Yadin have publicly favored the principle of territorial compromise on the West Bank.

The same view has been indicated privately by three ministers of Likud's Liberal Party wing and two National Religious Party ministers, Yosef Burg and Aharon Abu-Hatzeira. The third NRP minister, Zevulun Hammer, a well-known hawk who is regarded as a spokesman for the Gush Emunim, said in a recent interview that Sadat's visit must lead to "new thinking" in Israel on various elements of the Middle East conflict. He even conceded that the Palestinian problem is a legitimate subject for some new thinking.

Seeks Review Of Israeli Policy

Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, another hawk, has enthusiastically praised Sadat and called for a greater effort by Israel to take advantage of the opportunity created by the Egyptian President. Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, who has been the most active member of the Cabinet in the current negotiating process, called for a thorough review of Israeli policy as the nation approaches "the critical moment of truth."

Dayan stressed that he was not calling yet for a revision of established positions. But his remarks were seen as reflecting a private belief that official attitudes should be softened, at least on some of the outstanding issues.

Dayan agreed to join Begin's government on condition that its foreign policy remain based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and a promise from Begin that as long as peace efforts continue, Israel will not annex the West Bank. Since taking office, Dayan has adopted a moderate approach. He helped draft the U.S.-Israel working paper on Geneva conference procedures that provided for a Palestinian presence at the talks. He has since declared in the Knesset that the Palestinian problem is one of the main components of the Middle East conflict.

Begin Moderating Positions

But even Begin himself has taken some unexpectedly moderate positions since he assumed office. It was Begin who ordered the army to evacuate Gush Emunim settlers when they attempted to establish settlements on the West Bank not authorized by the government. Begin persuaded the Cabinet to approve the U.S.-Israel working paper and it was he, significantly, who praised Education

Minister Hammer's call for "new thinking."

It is too early to predict whether Begin will abandon some of his well-known fundamentalist doctrines. According to observers, that depends on whether he prefers to be remembered in history as the man who brought peace to the Middle East by agreeing to compromise on the West Bank or as one who missed a chance for peace by continuing to advocate the idea of a "Greater Israel." Should Begin choose the latter course, there are many in his Cabinet, probably a majority, who would withdraw their support of him.

WHITE HOUSE REFUSES TO DISCUSS LETTERS FROM CARTER TO SADAT

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6 (JTA)--The White House has refused to discuss the secret handwritten letters from President Carter that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat said prompted him to initiate peace moves with Israel. Neither would the White House comment on Egypt's severance of diplomatic relations with five Arab countries that assailed his peace initiative at the Tripoli, Libya meeting.

"We best serve at this point," by not going into the Carter letters to Sadat, Deputy Presidential News Secretary Rex Granum said yesterday. He replied, "certainly," when he was asked whether Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Affairs Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had been informed of the President's letters.

Asked whether Carter had bypassed diplomatic channels for a period of weeks in his letters to Sadat, Granum did not reply directly. He pointed out the purpose was to continue discussion of Middle East settlement discussions.

An Associated Press dispatch from Cairo had reported earlier yesterday that in an interview with the AP, Sadat said he got the idea for his Jerusalem trip about two months ago after corresponding with Carter. "He didn't propose it all," Sadat said. "At the precise moment when I received his personal letter in his own handwriting that no one knew except me and him, then I started thinking" about the trip. Sadat said the handwritten letters were sealed with wax and delivered outside normal diplomatic channels by a special envoy, according to the AP dispatch from Cairo.

Carter may have been referring to the letters when in an interview published yesterday in the New York Times, he told columnist James Reston in reply to whether he knew about the Sadat trip to Jerusalem in advance: "Sadat and I exchange communications frequently and he had made a proposal to me a week or so before that date that was precursors of this one. But I have to say that Sadat's actually going to Jerusalem at that time as a sole Arab leader was not anticipated."

The President said the only concern he expressed to Sadat when he told him about the planned Cairo meeting was that the date was too early. "I felt then, and expressed to Sadat directly, that consultation with the other leaders who were invited would be helpful, whether or not they attended," Carter said. "I still have that feeling which I believe he and Prime Minister (Menachem) Begin share." * * *

JOHANNESBURG (JTA)--Four Jewish candidates were elected to Parliament during the elections in South Africa last week. Three are members of the official opposition Progressive Federal Party and the fourth is a member of the South African Party.

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