

CABINET APPRISED OF ISMAILIA TALKS; NO OBJECTIONS OR DISAGREEMENTS; DAYAN'S ABSENCE RAISES SPECULATION

By Tuvia Mendelson

JERUSALEM, Dec. 27 (JTA)—The Cabinet met in special session for four hours today to hear reports from Premier Menachem Begin and Defense Minister Ezer Weizman on the Ismailia summit meeting with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. It was learned that there were no objections or disagreements, that no new decisions were taken and that Begin was authorized to make a statement in the Knesset tomorrow on the peace-making process.

It was not the Cabinet meeting but the conspicuous absence from it of Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan that commanded the news media's attention today. The failure of Dayan, a participant in the Ismailia talks, to attend the session and brief his colleagues, raised a new flood of rumors and speculation.

Cabinet Secretary Ariele Naor told reporters after the meeting that the reasons for Dayan's absence were "technical." That was repeated by Justice Minister Shmuel Tamir who added, "We are all busy with our ministries."

Mystery Of Dayan's Whereabouts

It was learned, however, that the Cabinet ministers were given the reason why Dayan did not attend and that Begin himself knew yesterday that the Foreign Minister would not be present. Reporters spent most of the day in a vain effort to substantiate various unconfirmed rumors. One was that there were serious differences between Dayan and Begin over the latter's peace plan. But veteran observers said it was unlikely that the Foreign Minister would protest by boycotting a Cabinet meeting.

Another rumor was that Dayan was meeting somewhere with King Hussein of Jordan today for talks linked to Hussein's upcoming meeting with President Carter in Iran. But there was no confirmation. Israel Radio quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Naftali Lavi, as saying that Dayan was "busy." Asked if he was in Israel or abroad, Lavi replied, "I don't know."

Reporters were unable to find out whether Dayan was at his office or elsewhere while the Cabinet met. But according to Israel Radio, Dayan will attend a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee tonight at which Begin and Weizman will be present.

Deputy Premier Yigael Yadin did not refer to Dayan's absence when he met reporters after the Cabinet session. Referring to the peace process, however, he said it was difficult to estimate how long negotiations will last but predicted they will take a long time and that there would be some difficulties and problems. He said it was wrong to expect a rapid conclusion of negotiations with a peace treaty.

Meanwhile, Israelis are awaiting tomorrow's Knesset session which will take up Begin's peace plan. Likud and the National Religious Party (NRP) have given their members freedom to vote as they choose. But the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) said that its members opposed to the plan would be allowed only to abstain. At

least one DMC member, Meir Zorez, is expected to abstain.

ISRAELI ARABS, JEWS GOING TO CAIRO TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR SADAT MOVES

JERUSALEM, Dec. 27 (JTA)—Jamil Shalhoub, an Arab lawyer in Haifa, is organizing a delegation of Israeli Arabs and Jews to go to Cairo to express support for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace initiative. Shalhoub told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today that he has 200 names on his list of participants so far and "the telephone does not stop ringing."

He has filed a request with the Prime Minister's Office for permission to go to Egypt and says the Egyptian authorities have indicated they would welcome such a delegation. If it materializes, it will be the first group of Israeli citizens to visit Egypt apart from diplomats engaged in negotiations and the officials and journalists accompanying them. Groups of Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza Strip went to Egypt on good will missions earlier this month with the encouragement of the Israeli authorities. But they were not citizens of Israel.

U.S. REACTS CAUTIOUSLY BUT WITH OPTIMISM TO ISMAILIA SUMMIT

By Helen Silver

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27 (JTA)—The State Department reacted cautiously but with optimism today to the outcome of the Ismailia summit meeting between Israeli Premier Menachem Begin and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. Department spokesman Tom Reston told reporters, "We are still in the process of receiving and assessing the reports on the meetings Sunday and Monday."

He said that the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Samuel Lewis, met with Begin in Jerusalem early today while his counterpart in Cairo, Ambassador Hermann Eilts, met with Sadat.

(In Jerusalem, Lewis told reporters that the Ismailia summit meeting was constructive and set the stage for serious, detailed negotiations to begin shortly between Israel and Egypt. His optimism was echoed by Israeli diplomats and officials returning from Cairo. The envoy said he would convey Begin's account of the summit to Carter.)

Need To Maintain Perspective

Reston read a statement to newsmen saying: "It seems to us important at this point to maintain perspective on the meetings which have taken place. It has been our objective, working with the Middle Eastern parties, to establish a process of negotiations which could lead to a comprehensive peace."

"As 1977 ends, there are now direct negotiations dealing with the principles that would cover a comprehensive settlement and other sensitive and procedural matters that would be part of an overall settlement. We are pleased that progress has been made at the recent meetings and that concrete steps have been agreed on for continuation of the substantive discussions."

Reston stressed, "We have always recognized that the beginning of negotiations, while a crucial step, will not by itself resolve all the difficult problems. That is now the work which lies ahead. We continue to support the objective of a comprehensive settlement that is also the objective of President

Sadat and Premier Begin."

Replying to a reporter's question, Reston said "This is not going to be an instant peace overnight. We are pleased that some progress was made and some concrete steps taken." He said, in his statement, that "establishing the negotiating framework for a comprehensive settlement will be one of the important items on the agenda in the weeks ahead."

Asked if President Carter will meet with President Hafez Assad of Syria during his upcoming visit to several Middle Eastern countries, Reston said, "As President Carter said, he would be happy to meet with Assad if it could be worked out. At this time there are no plans for this meeting." He added, "We are in continuing touch with the Syrians."

Condemns Killing Of Palestinian

Reston was asked to comment on yesterday's assassination of Hamdi Kadi, a Palestinian official on the West Bank employed by the Israeli military government. The Palestine Liberation Organization has claimed responsibility for the murder. The State Department spokesman said, "We have seen reports that the PLO has taken responsibility for that particular action. I cannot confirm that for you but obviously we condemn the violence." He said the U.S. had "no independent information" that the PLO claim is "correct."

Kadi was killed while on his way to work. The 40-year-old official, who was in charge of education in Ramallah, was shot from a passing car which quickly sped away. An Israeli military government spokesman said Kadi was killed for political reasons as a result of his cooperation with Israeli authorities.

GENERAL STRIKE IN YAMIT IN PROTEST AGAINST BEGIN'S PLAN

By Yitzhak Shargil and Tuvia Mendelson

TEL AVIV, Dec. 27 (JTA)—Yamit, the new development town on the coast of northern Sinai, was closed down for three hours today by a general strike called by the local residents to protest Premier Menachem Begin's plan that would return all of Sinai to Egyptian rule. Beginning at 7 a.m. this morning no workers were allowed to enter or leave Yamit, stores, workshops, schools and kindergartens were shut as was the local yeshiva.

The worried settlers were reacting to published reports that the Yamit area and the surrounding settlements would revert to Egyptian sovereignty within three years and until then would be under United Nations protection. They said they were told by a Knesset personality whose name they refused to reveal, that the published version of the Begin plan was, in fact, correct and their fears therefore were warranted.

The establishment and development of Yamit had been a pet project of Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan when he was Defense Minister in the Labor government and had the support of the Labor-led regime. The authorities encouraged settlement there, especially by immigrants, as a place that offered opportunities and challenges to young, ambitious people with wide horizons. An American woman who settled in Yamit recently, Carol Roadblatt, told a reporter today "I did not leave Miami Beach to live under Egyptian rule. I came to live in Israel."

David Margalit, head of the Yamit yeshiva, said a group of residents went to see Likud Knesset members to protest the Begin plan. "They are simply blinded by Begin's moves," he said. Another deputation of settlers went to Jerusalem today to demonstrate outside the Prime Minister's

Office while the Cabinet was in special session.

Widespread Protests Erupt

The scope of the protests was widened today by a meeting at Ofra of representatives of virtually all of the Jewish settlements, who came from Sharm el-Sheikh, Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. All of the speakers said they would fight the Begin proposals by all possible means, starting with a demonstration called for tomorrow in front of the Knesset building where Begin's report on the negotiations with Egypt is scheduled for debate.

The Ofra meeting involved not only spokesmen for Gush Emunim but also representatives of other settlement movements. An agreement emerged from the heated discussions that the settlements should fight Begin under one overall committee.

Moshe Shamir of Likud and a member of the Greater Israel Movement, formerly one of Begin's staunchest supporters, denounced the Premier, declaring he had "betrayed" his supporting voters. Shamir declared that the people of Israel were "drunk" with euphoria. He said the Begin proposal was a "folly" and a "grave mistake."

Yigal Cohen, another Likud MK, rejected the idea of placing Israeli settlements in the Sinai under Egyptian or United Nations rule. Some observers said the presence of Rabbi Haim Drukman, a National Religious Party MK, among the demonstrators at Ofra might indicate a coming split within the NRP on the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. In an earlier development, Zvi Shiloah, chairman of the Greater Israel Movement, resigned from the Likud Executive in protest against the Begin plan.

Pro-Mapam Group Commends Begin

(In the United States, meanwhile, there was a sharp reversal of attitudes toward Begin. The Mapam-oriented Americans for Progressive Israel-Hashomer Hatzair (API-HH) issued a statement today praising the Premier's "new flexibility towards territorial concessions in return for peace." But a group calling itself the National Union of Jewish Activists, led by Jewish Defense League founder Meir Kahane, denounced Begin's plans for self-rule for the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

(The API-HH statement, issued by Moshe Kagan, chairman of its policy committee, said "We are encouraged at Prime Minister Begin's new flexibility toward territorial concessions in return for peace in the Middle East. Begin, who has been known in the past to advocate a stand of 'not one inch' is now proposing many of the points contained in the Mapam peace plan issued following the Six-Day War and of which Begin was very often critical." Kagan noted that, ironically, much of the criticism in Israel against Begin now comes from his own party.

(The National Union, many of whose members, including Kahane, had hailed Begin's election victory last May, today condemned him for allegedly giving away "an inalienable part of the historic land of Israel which God has given exclusively to the Jewish people." They accused the Premier of betraying "all of the great religious and nationalistic principles" that he had "fought for all of his life" and of "surrender to international pressure for one-sided Israeli concessions.")

ISRAELIS RETURNING FROM CAIRO

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, Dec. 27 (JTA)—With the Cairo conference adjourned until early next year, the Israeli "colony" of diplomats and journalists who have been in the Egyptian capital for the past

three weeks is returning.

Dr. Eliahu Ben-Elissar, head of the Israeli negotiating team in Cairo, told reporters at Ben Gurion Airport that reports of disappointment in Egypt over the outcome of the Ismailia talks were grossly exaggerated. He also said he could not understand why there was disappointment in Israel. "This is the beginning of a long process and there are ups and downs in every such process," he said.

Ben-Elissar said the work of the Cairo conference was of important material value and many personal connections were made. It was an important start, he said, and he was confident that peace ultimately will be achieved.

Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, who accompanied Begin to Ismailia, spoke in a similar vein to the Likud Knesset faction today. He said he was confident that 1978 will be the year of peace.

Pending resumption of negotiations on the ministerial level, only a skeleton staff of Israelis remained in Cairo along with a few Israel Broadcasting Service people who will do a series of programs on Egypt. An El Al Boeing 707 from Cairo landed at Ben Gurion Airport last night with scores of Israeli journalists.

GOP GROUP SUGGESTS FREE TRADE ZONE ON WEST BANK, GAZA STRIP AS PEACE MOVE

By Helen Silver

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27 (JTA)—The Ripon Society, a national Republican Party research and policy organization, in a policy paper issued here, recommended that the parties involved in seeking peace in the Middle East consider establishment of all or part of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a free trade zone. The paper declared that the status of the West Bank remains the most difficult problem to be faced in reaching settlement.

However, it suggested that by setting the problem in the proper economic context, the intensity of the political dispute might be lessened. Questions of sovereignty and authority could be negotiated in an atmosphere where the focus would not be on "the all or nothing question of whether the West Bank should immediately be set up as a sovereign nation," the Society declared.

The paper, issued last Friday, cited the existence of 30 jurisdictions having free ports or free trade zones, including Aqaba in Jordan, the Suez Canal cities in Egypt, Beirut, and Bahrain in the Middle East. Such areas generally provide for removal of taxes, tariffs and other controls that are barriers to free trade. They allow industries which are located there to operate with minimal taxes and restrictions on investment.

The Society suggested that such a zone on the West Bank could become a trade and investment gateway to surrounding countries and perhaps to the entire Middle East, replacing war-torn Beirut; and provide employment to the present Palestinian residents of the West Bank and thus assure stability to the area as a whole.

"The free market orientation of such a zone would ensure the permanent exclusion of the Soviet Union from the area and preempt the possibility of a radical socialist Palestinian state on the model of Cuba," the Society said.

Could Aid Self-Determination

The paper also declared that the establishment of a free trade zone would provide an opportunity for self-determination for the Palestinians while protecting the security interests of surrounding states.

Elected West Bank representatives "might exercise merely local government functions or agreed-upon kinds of international representation," the paper stated. "However, because of minimal taxing authority, the authority would be unable to support a military buildup threatening to Israel or Jordan."

A policy of the authority to protect existing residents of the West Bank from the loss of their land through sale as well as force would allow the Palestinians to benefit more from the economic expansion, the Society asserted, adding that such a "non-alienation" policy would create—in a literal sense—a Palestinian homeland.

REPORT POLAND SEEKS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, WORLD JEWRY

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 27 (JTA)—Kalman Sultanik, a member of the American Section of the World Zionist Organization Executive told the WZO Executive here yesterday that Poland wishes to improve its relations with Israel and world Jewry. He said that desire was expressed to a delegation of American Jews in Warsaw recently by a senior official of the Polish Foreign Ministry.

Sultanik, who was a member of the group, said it went to Poland to discuss the payment of reparations and various other matters affecting Polish Jewry with the authorities there. The group met with a number of officials, including the Minister of Religion and the director general of the Foreign Ministry. The latter asked for a meeting and spent four hours with the visitors, Sultanik reported. He said the trip to Warsaw materialized as a result of a memorandum sent to the Polish government by U.S. Jews.

The memorandum asked for the return to Polish Jews of property that had belonged to the Jewish community, the preservation of Jewish documents and the erection of a memorial monument at the gravesite of Jewish concentration camp victims. Sultanik reported that the Polish Jewish community presently numbers between 6000-10,000 people, most of them elderly.

SEMINARY MARKS 100TH BIRTHDAY

BUDAPEST, Dec. 27 (JTA)—The Hungarian Rabbinical Institute celebrated its 100th anniversary two weeks ago with a special ceremony here which was attended by representatives of Jewish communities in East Europe and several West European countries. The Institute is the only rabbinical training seminary in East Europe and serves the entire Communist bloc. There are presently 15 students at the Institute, including three from the Soviet Union.

In a special ceremony service, Dr. Sander Scheiber, director of the Institute, described the seminary as "the bastion of European Jewry." Imre Miklos, Minister of Religious Affairs, told the participants that the Institute "has and should continue to educate rabbis who see no contradiction between their religious duties and their patriotic sentiments."

Among those in attendance were Moscow's Chief Rabbi Jacob Fishman, Rumania's Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, and the presidents of the Jewish communities of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia. Dr. Nahum Goldmann, Gerhard Riegner and Armand Kaplan represented the World Jewish Congress. Gerard Weinstock, representing the American Jewish Committee, and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, of the Park East Synagogue in New York and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, were also present.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES GAMES THE NEWS MEDIA PLAY

By Murray Zuckoff

NEW YORK, Dec. 27 (JTA)--There is an illusion extant that Israeli and Egyptian leaders are conducting peace negotiations and that the plans each side is proposing to the other are in fact real. There is a further illusion that Premier Menachem Begin of Israel and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt are actually talking to each other as self-structured flesh and bone human beings.

The reality is quite the opposite. The real negotiations are being carried on by the general news media. The basic peace plans are being formulated by reporters and columnists. And the real protagonists are the headline writers who try to outscop each other. The fact is that Sadat and Begin are not acting as heads of their respective states but as instruments of various news mediums, that they are really media-produced clones--if one is to believe the front page meanderings of the daily press and television and radio reports.

On any given day, especially in recent weeks, there are scenarios replete with plots, counterplots and subplots, dialogues and monologues and complete stage settings for the latest chapter in the Middle East drama carefully devised and directed by reporters, columnists and editorial writers.

And if, heavens forebode, the real Mideast protagonists should stray from these carefully prepared scripts and improvise on their own, the same reporters and columnists will, on the day following, act as critics--either decrying the real events as having fallen far short of what the script had indicated would happen or expressing surprise that the events had taken an unexpected good turn for which the scripts had not provided.

The Guessing Game Ensues

This tragi-comic situation reached its apex two weeks ago when Begin was in Washington having talks with President Carter and other key Administration officials. Begin had announced in advance that he wanted Carter to review Israel's peace plan that he would present to Sadat. But the Israeli Premier promised that he would not publicly disclose the plan prior to meeting with Sadat. Begin kept his promise but the media immediately embarked on its own version of "Truth or Consequences."

Some Israeli papers "leaked" what they claimed was the substance of the peace plan. Major dailies in this country followed with reams of copy about the plan as learned from "Israeli sources" (the news papers). The Israeli press, not to be outdone nor outflanked, reacted swiftly to "American sources" (press reports). Depending on their editorial bias, they either denounced Begin for giving away too much or too little.

The American press then focused on what it claimed was an "Israeli consensus" and speculated or reported on the basis of "sources" that Begin was either in trouble at home with his own "rejectionist front" for being too generous to the Egyptians or a hero to Israeli doves who were sighting peace in the jump column of the lead news story.

In fact, the activity of the Israeli and American press that weekend in reacting to each other's stories, rather than to real events, was so frenetic in trying to "reveal" and "disclose" what plan Begin had brought with him to Washington that when he finally offered some elements in that plan Dec. 18 on CBS-TV "Face the Nation," some papers gave it short shrift.

The New York Times, for example, having exhausted its pages with "disclosures" and "revelations" prior to the television show in frantic guess-

work about the plan, did not deem it necessary to highlight Begin's interview on CBS. After all--with all due regard for speculation--Begin's public announcement was so much less dramatic than its own ruminations.

Diplomacy-By-Media

The same tragi-comedy occurred last weekend when Israeli and Western media reports had it that Sadat and Begin would sign an agreement "in principle" on the framework of a peace treaty. When this failed to happen in the real context of events the media had a field day intoning that the Christmas Day talks between the two leaders in Ismailia had been far from successful, even, possibly, a failure. But if it was a failure, and if the public in Israel, the U.S., and other countries felt a let down, it was only in terms of the preordained media script.

Diplomacy-by-media is not new. And reporters, being what they are, must file stories every day to justify their own existence and importance as well as that of their newspapers, television or radio stations. There is, in fact, nothing wrong with reporters and columnists trying to chart the general course of events on the basis of objectively verifiable trends, statements by heads of state or their own insights into ongoing developments. But the practice of writing scripts in their city rooms or foreign news bureaus and then judging real events by their own imaginings is a dangerous game.

In the specific context of the Israeli-Egyptian talks, the leaders of both countries have had to react and respond almost as frequently to media reports about their talks as they have had to react to the talks actually taking place between themselves. They have been placed in the ironic position of having to explain what did or did not happen, and the significance of either, more in terms of what the media claims happened or should have happened than in terms of the genuine developments or shortcomings in terms of realpolitik.

Fortunately, both Sadat and Begin are realistic and astute enough political leaders to avoid the pitfall of becoming prisoners of the media. Unfortunately, however, the public is not in the same position since it can only rely on media reports to shape its view of the future. If peace does come to the Mideast it will not be the result of what the media propounded but because of what the real protagonists expounded.

The point is that the media, in the final analysis, can only serve as a conduit for reporting real events if, that is, it is doing the job it is supposed to do. Its only vested interest in that history is to publicize it and to dramatize it by highlighting reality. It cannot make history. History is being made, at this moment at least, by two men who have the courage and vision to break the links in a 30-year chain of hostility, animosity and suspicion and find some way to reforge Mideast reality. For them and the people they represent, the vested interest is life or death.

JERUSALEM (JTA)--The ministerial committee on Jerusalem has decided to reduce to a minimum the number of government offices outside the capital. This will involve the move of some 5000 government employees and their families to Jerusalem by 1979. About 3700 civil servants working in the Tel Aviv area will be moved to Jerusalem by next August and 1300 others, mostly in the Defense Ministry, will be transferred in 1979. Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon said he would transfer his entire ministry to Jerusalem by next summer except for an extension service that will remain at Beit Dagan.