

JTA daily news bulletin

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Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency/165 West 46th Street/New York, New York 10036

Vol. XLV—61st Year

Monday, March 27, 1978

No. 59

CABINET SUPPORTS BEGIN; TERMS PEACE PLAN 'FAIR-BASIS' FOR NEGOTIATIONS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA)—The Cabinet today unanimously approved reports by Premier Menachem Begin and Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan on their Washington visit and on their "presentation of the Israeli position in the talks with President Carter." A communique issued after a four-hour political debate indicated no specific new concessions by Israel. But the communique pointedly referred to the Israeli peace plan as a "fair basis" for negotiation, deliberately using the wording which Carter himself has consistently used.

Cabinet Secretary Arye Naor said he would "not pretend" that there had been a change of situation since last week, when Begin had publicly declared that certain demands made by the U. S. were unacceptable by Israel.

But he pointed out that the Cabinet communique was phrased "without any negatives" and added that Israel wanted Egypt to come forward with counterproposals. Israel did not see its peace plan as a *diktat*, Naor said, but as a basis on which to proceed with substantive negotiations. The time "has not come yet for changes" in the Israeli plan, he said. Such time would only come if and when substantive negotiations were entered upon.

Number Of Initiatives Underway

Naor said the Cabinet would be taking a "number of initiatives" designed to "advance the resumption of negotiations with Egypt." One of these will be Begin's reply to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's last letter to him, received just before he left for Washington. That will be sent in a day or two. There would be other initiatives, too, Naor pledged, "but publication would ruin them."

Naor admitted that the Israeli Cabinet could be said to have responded to Carter's appeal for "reconsideration" mainly in the literal sense of having reconsidered in detail all the aspects of the Israeli peace plan and the political situation. It had not responded to the extent of actually introducing changes. He insisted that unanimity had prevailed at the Cabinet debate, with Democratic Movement for Change ministers joining others in endorsing the Premier's actions and reiterating their support of the Israeli peace plan.

Raps U.S. Meddling

Speaking for the Cabinet, Naor blasted reported efforts by U.S. officials to "meddle" in Israeli politics by airing the wish for a change of Premier. "Ministers expressed their disdain at this," Naor said. Ministers, and particularly Finance Minister Simcha Ehrlich, had also hit at Labor's Abba Eban for speaking on a New York TV station interview of the government's "disintegration." Ehrlich said this "crossed the line of loyalty to the State."

The Secretary said Defense Minister Ezer Weizman's call for a unity government and his criticism of the Cabinet for not acting energetically enough to revive the talks with Egypt had

not come up at today's session. But apparently they were the subject of an earlier tete-a-tete between Begin and Weizman in the Premier's office. No details of this were available.

Naor said the Cabinet was aware of the very sharp and widespread criticism around the world of Israel's action in Lebanon. He faulted the army spokesman's office for failing to properly explain the action and the methods used by the Israel Defense Force.

Egypt Prepared For Further Peace Efforts

(Meanwhile, the Egyptian National Security Council, the country's top policy-making body, declared yesterday that it was prepared to go ahead with Middle East peace efforts despite the recent events in Lebanon, although it indicated it did not expect any progress until Israel changed its policy. The meeting was called in Cairo by Sadat.

(Foreign Minister Mohammed Kaamel, in a statement after the meeting, said "Egypt will continue its peace efforts toward a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and recognition of the need and necessity for mutual security for all countries in this region."

(Sadat, meanwhile, told a visiting delegation from American universities today that the U.S. should deal with the Mideast as "a full partner and not as a negotiator or mediator." He said that if the Palestinian question was solved "in all its dimensions, 90 percent of the other problems will be solved and we can achieve peace in no time.")

WEEKEND ROUNDUP:

ISRAEL AFTER BEGIN'S WASHINGTON VISIT

By David Landau, Yitzhak Shargil, Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA)—Premier Menachem Begin, his fundamental differences with President Carter over the methods of achieving peace fully aired, returned to a sharply divided Israel. His supporters are rallying behind him. His critics, alarmed by his failure to gain American endorsement of Israel's position, are demanding a change of policy and, possibly, new leadership as one of the most bitter political debates in the nation's history began to take shape.

Several hundred Begin supporters, responding to exhortations from the pulpit during Sabbath services, held a solidarity demonstration outside the Prime Minister's residence last night. It underlined the growing polarization between "hawks" and "doves." A dovish religious group called "Other Zionism" and a group called "Peace Now" announced that they would stage a sit-in in front of Begin's home to protest "the political failure of Begin's policy."

Begin returned from the U.S. at noon Friday to a warm reception by Cabinet ministers, senior military officers, Knesset members, the two chief rabbis and an extraordinarily large turn-out of the press corps.

He told them that his talks with Carter in Washington were difficult—"the most difficult three days of my life"—that "we were presented with demands which we could not accept," that "there were points on which we partially agreed" but "I cannot divulge at present what they are" and "there were points on which we shall continue to discuss." He also referred to continuing contacts with Egypt "direct"

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**BEGIN URGES U.S. JEWS TO MOBILIZE
PUBLIC OPINION ON ISRAEL'S BEHALF**

NEW YORK (JTA)—Premier Men-
achem Begin urged American Jews to
unite in support of Israel and urged that they show
their solidarity with the Jewish State by helping
mobilize American public opinion on behalf of
the government's proposed peace plan with the
Arabs. "Go around, take our peace plan with the
it known, ask for support," Begin told some 700
Jewish leaders in a meeting convened by the Com-
mittee of Presidents of Major American Jewish
Organizations.

Robbi Alexander Schindler, chairman of the

and "via the U.S." and pledged to "use all ways in pursuance of peace."

But Begin was confronted on his return with what some observers see as an incipient revolt within his own coalition Cabinet. Before he landed, Israeli newspapers were featuring an interview with Defense Minister Ezer Weizman who called for the immediate establishment of a "national peace government" embracing the Labor opposition. Weizman said this was necessary because Israel was in the midst of an unprecedented crisis with the U.S. and must present a united front to Washington.

But some circles quickly interpreted his remarks as Weizman's first move to depose Begin. They pointed out that Weizman knows quite well that Labor would not join the Likud-led coalition government unless its policies were substantially altered, an unlikely prospect as long as Begin remains at the helm. Sources close to the Defense Minister told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it would be "premature" to view Weizman's proposal as a move to change the political leadership.

Begin, when asked for his reaction, told reporters at Ben Gurion Airport that he had not read the interview. But if Weizman meant a "government of peace, we already have one," Begin said, and if he meant a national unity government, "I always was and am today wholeheartedly for it." It was learned from reliable sources, however, that Weizman had informed Begin in advance of what he intended to propose but did not elicit the Premier's blessings. Weizman already has been fiercely attacked by all branches of Likud.

Begin's Ace Card

Begin's ace card at the moment appears to be a widespread rumor that the Carter Administration actively seeks his ouster. As expected, this has drawn an indignant response from the Israeli public. Yehuda Ben Meir, Whip of the National Religious Party's Knesset faction, introduced an urgent motion over the weekend to protest "the American intervention attributed to news reports that an American personality called for the change of government in Israel as a prerequisite for peace."

When Begin was asked about the rumor, he noted that the Premier of Israel is elected by the nation and the Knesset, not by any American diplomatic representative. He was applauded by the assembled reporters.

But sources close to Begin are already linking Weizman's proposal and the rumored American intervention to a sinister plot against the Prime Minister in which, they hint, the opposition and perhaps sections of the news media are involved. Begin acknowledged that he has troubles in his own political establishment when he told reporters "Give me some time to put my house in order. I have just arrived."

Nature, Magnitude Of Problem

The exact nature and magnitude of his troubles were subjects of intense speculation here over the weekend. Within hours of the appearance of the Weizman interview, Likud's Liberal Party wing issued statements rejecting any attempt from any quarter to depose Begin. But the statements were formulated in a patriotic context as replies to the rumored intervention from Washington.

Many observers believe that the Liberals, more moderate on foreign policy matters than their Herut partners, may play a decisive role if and when any momentum builds up to get rid of Begin. Only a week ago, they openly opposed Begin's

choice of a candidate to succeed President Ephraim Katzir and endorsed their own leader, Elimelech Rimalt, for the Presidency. The Liberal Party holds 15 Knesset seats. Should it, or a part of it, defect from Begin's policies and should they be joined by the NRP's dovish faction, Begin's coalition would crumble.

Weizman, himself a member of Herut, refrained in his interview from attacking Begin's policies and agreed with the Premier that the U.S. was, in effect, demanding total withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories which, he said, Israel can never accept. But observers noted that while arguing for Israel's continued presence on the West Bank, the Defense Minister cited purely security needs. He did not claim, as Begin has done repeatedly, that the West Bank belongs to Israel for historical and religious reasons.

His interview contained implicit criticism of the Premier's handling of the peace process. Weizman maintained that Israel "could have done more and should still do more" to revive direct negotiations with Egypt. He recalled his own conversations with President Anwar Sadat and stressed that he still maintains contacts with Egypt's War Minister Gen. Mohammed Gamassy. However, Weizman was disenchanted with American mediation efforts. He claimed that the shuttle diplomacy conducted by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Alfred L. Atherton had been counterproductive.

Opposition By The Labor Alignment

Begin is due to make a political statement to the Knesset tomorrow. He faces a strong attack from opposition leader Shimon Peres. Peres flatly rejected the idea of a "national peace government" in interviews published over the weekend. He stressed that the government's policy must be changed before the political structure of the Cabinet can be changed.

Peres was supported by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban who challenged the Democratic Movement for Change and the "practical" elements within the NRP and the Liberal Party to rally around a more realistic foreign policy and force the government to change its course, even under the present parliamentary structure.

Specifically, Eban said the government should change its stand on the issue of Jewish settlements in occupied Arab territories and on its claim that Security Council Resolution 242 is not applicable to the West Bank with respect to territorial compromise. "I think we could correct the situation simply by accepting a moratorium on settlement activity during the negotiating period and reiterating our fidelity to Resolution 242 without the superfluous addition which accepts that 242 has no application whatever to Judaea and Samaria," Eban said.

BEGIN URGES U.S. JEWS TO MOBILIZE PUBLIC OPINION ON ISRAEL'S BEHALF

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 26 (JTA)--Premier Menachem Begin of Israel urged American Jews to unite in support of Israel and urged that they show their solidarity with the Jewish State by helping mobilize American public opinion on behalf of his government's proposed peace plan with the Arabs. "Go around, take our peace plan, make it known, ask for support," Begin told some 700 Jewish leaders in a meeting convened by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, chairman of the

Presidents Conference, in a sharply worded emotional speech, expressed the unswerving support of American Jewry for Israel. "We uphold the hands of Israel's leadership not only by preserving our unity but also by giving voice--strong, unfettered voice--to our convictions." American Jewry, he declared, will not be "timid" and will face the Carter Administration "and we will speak the truth as we see it."

Begin and Schindler addressed the Jewish leaders from across the country Thursday evening at the Waldorf Astoria. It was Begin's last public appearance in this country before flying back to Israel after holding talks with President Carter in Washington. Grim and weary-looking, the Israeli leader described his meetings in Washington as "the most difficult days in my life."

He said that his proposals, which had been received last December in an "atmosphere of understanding," were not acceptable at this time. "The talks in the White House were difficult," Begin said. "These are times of trial, these are times of difficulty."

Begin said that the impression created in the U.S. is that Israel is "obstructing" the peace negotiations. "This allegation is morally wrong," he declared, adding: "Israel promotes peace and makes sacrifices for peace. Israel never obstructed peace and never will." He said Israel's proposal for full Egyptian sovereignty in the Sinai and the plan to give autonomy to the West Bank Arabs were the furthest reaching concessions any Israeli government has ever made.

Statement By Schindler

Schindler told the gathering that when "promises are broken we will say so. When we see a wrong we will call it a wrong wherever it is committed. When pressures are exerted on Israel we will say that pressures are exerted on Israel. When we sense that our country is selling out our idealism for petrodollars, we will say (so). Whatever the evil is, we will call it by its real name and not justify it on the basis that it is something else."

Continuing, Schindler declared: "Away with the counsel of timidity. Away with the caution of cowardice. Away with those who would flatter themselves into the good graces of the powerful. Away with those who have no convictions. Away with those who would beg for good-will and toady for favor. Who are we? We are Americans with our roots deep in the soil of this land. We are also Jews."

GUR: UN RESOLUTION ON SOUTH LEBANON THWARTED POSSIBLE ACCORD BY ISRAEL WITH LEBANON, SYRIA OVER THE AREA

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, March 26 (JTA)--Chief of Staff Gen. Mordechai Gur charged last night that the hasty United States action in pressing a United Nations Security Council resolution on south Lebanon torpedoed a possible agreement by Israel with Lebanon and Syria over this area.

But Gur, in television and radio interviews, said that such an agreement was still possible because of the Lebanese government's desire for full sovereignty over south Lebanon, the UN presence and the understanding shown by the Arab deterrent force, an apparent reference to Syria whose troops remained north of the Litani River throughout the Israeli operation. Syria has also decided to keep the terrorists from returning to south Lebanon and to prevent any reinforcements being sent there.

The Israeli withdrawal has not yet begun from

south Lebanon except for a few units, according to Gur, because the UN force has not yet been able to establish itself due to hostility from the Lebanese Christian militia and poor weather. The Chief of Staff said he did not believe the UN would be able to fulfill its role unless the Palestinian terrorists were controlled by others. "I wouldn't think Canadians, Iranians or others would want their soldiers to serve under fire," he said.

Gur stressed that Israel will continue to help the south Lebanese Christians and any agreement must ensure their safety. He met yesterday with Major Saad Haddad, the commander of the Christian forces, and reiterated Israel's promise not to abandon them.

Role Of Syria

The Syrian-controlled Arab deterrent force made its announcement yesterday that no military personnel or equipment will be allowed to go into south Lebanon. The Syrians also said that other supplies such as food or medical equipment must go through the Lebanese government.

The Israelis view the Syrian action as motivated by a desire to see Israeli troops withdraw from south Lebanon as quickly as possible and to keep the terrorists from drawing the Syrians into a clash with Israeli troops. The Syrians also want to convince Israel that Damascus must be considered in any agreement on Lebanon's future, according to the belief here.

The Syrian efforts to clamp down on the terrorists did not stop the shelling of Israeli areas and south Lebanese villages from north of the Litani River. Slight damage was reported Friday and yesterday but there were no casualties. The shelling has also prevented UN troops from taking their positions at the Khardala Bridge.

The UN troops, a Swedish unit, again tried to move toward the bridge today when shooting broke out. Palestinian terrorists are on the north side of the bridge in an ancient fortress while on the south side of the bridge is the town of Marjayoun, a major Christian stronghold, where Israeli troops are still present.

According to Israel, the Swedish unit was approaching the bridge aided by several Israeli sappers searching for mines when they were fired upon from across the river by the Palestinian terrorists. The Israelis did not fire at the terrorists. However, UN headquarters in Beirut said only that the Swedish unit was caught in a crossfire. Israeli sources see this as a portent of how the UN will deal with the situation once it is in charge of security in south Lebanon.

ARDEATINE CAVES MASSACRE MARKED

ROME, March 26 (JTA)--A rabbi and a Catholic priest led a religious service Friday at the Ardeatine Caves outside Rome on the 34th anniversary of the Nazi World War II reprisal massacre of 335 people, 70 of them Jews. At the ceremony, none of the usual speeches was read. Instead, relatives of the victims prayed quietly. Giovanni Gigliozzi, president of the Association for Families of Martyrs Fallen for Liberty, said quiet meditation had been preferred to speeches following the March 16 kidnapping of Christian Democratic Party President Aldo Moro. He said the kidnapping outrage arose "from the same violence that killed the Ardeatine Cave martyrs. Violence has no color or party." * * *

JERUSALEM (JTA)--Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan will pay an official visit to Rumania early April at the invitation of Rumania's Foreign Minister.

FROM A REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK: BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA)--Premier Menachem Begin's third Washington visit was marked by millions of words on the airways and in print and countless feet of film. For three days he was the central figure in the world's prime news event. Yet through it all he maintained his equanimity and firmness in his beliefs. The leader of Israel left no doubt at any time about the main issue for him--refusal to walk the political path that he thinks will lead to Israel's destruction and harm to the Jewish people.

Begin was unmoved by either flattery or responsibility. When President Carter laid on him the onus for any rupture of world peace Begin did not flinch. He observed in turn that he had offered peace and negotiations for compromise. John Chancellor, of NBC-TV, one of the influential breed of media diplomats, predicted a stature for Begin greater than David Ben Gurion if he "made peace." Begin's rejoinder was an amused grin and laughter. "Don't make comparisons," he replied. "We don't stop thinking of peace."

Although the "confrontation" theme was widespread in the media, the divergence of views between Carter and Begin do not represent a cleavage in the relationship that some depict as the worst in Israeli-American history. Begin himself pointed out that the situation in 1956, when Israel with the support of Britain and France entered Sinai, was worse. At that time, he recalled to Chancellor, President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, threatened to obtain sanctions against Israel in the United Nations Security Council if Israel did not leave Sinai.

Besides this observation, American officials also noted that Carter and Begin actually showed restraint and their attitudes were far from the rancor and bitterness of America and Israel during the Ford Administration's "reassessment" in 1975. The Rogers plan in 1969 evoked more Israeli bitterness, too, they said.

A danger, however, is that the "difficulties" between the two leaders may be blown up into disastrous proportions by the media in both countries. Some observers believe it is a possibility that requires watching. Criticism in Israel of Begin, normal in a democratic country, is being intensively reported in the American media. Conversely, American criticism with anti-Semitic tones in some instances are hurried into Israel's media that creates additional fears there.

Carter was said to have listed for Senate Foreign Relations Committee members on Thursday several major points which Begin would not accept.

These "refusals" by Begin, it was reported, were to dismantle Israel's settlements in Sinai or "even" let Israeli settlers be under Egyptian or United Nations protection instead of Israel's; "concede" that UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967 "obligates" Israel to withdraw from "at least part" of the West Bank and Gaza; and "accept" a U.S. proposal for an interim international arrangement on the West Bank and Gaza with a plebiscite at the end of five years for the Palestinian Arabs to cast their lot with Jordan or Israel or remain under international control. The international arrangement on the West Bank was seen here as leading to a Palestinian state.

Carter also was reported to have told the Senators that "the diplomatic process has come to a halt." But on Wednesday night, one of his top advisors told a roomful of reporters that he expected the chief U.S. negotiator, Alfred Atherton, will return to the Middle East sometime after April 1.

A top Administration official made several important points that have gone virtually unreported. One is that "we believe Arab governments should attach something to a peace settlement" about Israel's security. Carter and Begin have "agreed they would remain in close personal touch" and the President "reaffirmed continuing efforts for a comprehensive peace."

He emphasized the Carter-Begin talks were "not the beginning or end" of the peace process but the official acknowledgement that President Anwar Sadat of Egypt considers it "important" for Israel to commit itself to the "principle of withdrawal from the territories."

Begin's religious and family sides emerged naturally and yet strikingly in view of the age of skepticism and individualism. While some 400 guests, including Vice President Walter Mondale and former Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, were arriving at the reception for him at the Israeli Embassy, Begin was reading the Megillah at a minyan in the Ambassador's library, the evening being also the start of Purim.

When a press photographer mentioned to an Israeli if there could be a minyan for him to say kaddish, Begin was asked if he would join and he agreed at once.

At the National Press Club, when Begin concluded his presentation, he was jokingly asked whether he would consider an exchange of grandchildren with Sadat. Noting Mrs. Sadat and Mrs. Begin have exchanged letters--"and this applies to the grandfathers, not only to the grandmothers--we hope and wish that the day will come, and may God bring it very very soon, that my grandchildren will play in Cairo and Sadat's grandchildren in Jerusalem." Begin noted that he has eight grandchildren and Sadat signed "eight envelopes" for them. "What a beautiful gesture," Begin said.

SQUADRON ELECTED AJCONGRESS PRESIDENT

MIAMI, March 26 (JTA)--Howard M. Squadron, a New York City lawyer and long active in Jewish communal affairs, was elected president of the American Jewish Congress at its national biennial convention here. He succeeds Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg who had served three two-year terms. Squadron, 52, is the first president of the organization in 45 years who is not a rabbi. He was elected by a vote of 230-98 votes. The 98 votes were received by Rabbi David Polish of Chicago, the only other candidate.

Squadron declared that the AJCongress "is taking the position that the United States should not be twisting arms or acting as an arbitrator, but rather should perform the role of a mediator, restoring communications and bringing together all the parties for discussions." He also said that the Carter Administration "is obsessed with the energy problem and is making a mistake by adopting on the Middle East the view of Saudi Arabia."

TEL AVIV (JTA)--An explosive device found Saturday on a Hgifa street was safely dismantled. Police believe it may have been planted by terrorists.