

ISRAEL RAID BECOMES TANGLED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN POLITICS

By David Landau and Gil Sedan
(Jerusalem) and Hugh Orgel (Tel Aviv)

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- Israel's raid on Iraq's nuclear facility Sunday became enmeshed in election campaign politics today as Premier Menachem Begin, continuing his defiant stance against mounting world criticism, accused Labor Party leader Shimon Peres of having opposed the air strike that Begin claims saved Israel from destruction by Iraqi atomic bombs.

Begin drew a sharp reply from Peres. The Labor Party issued a statement yesterday accusing the Likud government of timing the air attack to gain maximum political benefit. The party named Gen. (ret.) Mordechai Gur, who was Chief of Staff during the famous Entebbe rescue operation in 1976, as its spokesman on the issue.

Begin vowed at a press conference late yesterday that Israel would "not tolerate" the development of "weapons of mass destruction" by any of its enemies. He said that if the Iraqis rebuilt their bombed-out nuclear reactor Israel would destroy it again, but he predicted it would take them "many years" to rebuild it.

Begin also lashed out at France and Italy for having supplied nuclear know-how and material to the Iraqis. Invoking the Holocaust, he termed their behavior "inhuman" and "shameful." Those European nations "should have remembered the Jewish tragedy in Nazi Europe, Begin said, but instead they contributed to a potential "new Holocaust" against the Jewish state. He said 2,500,000 Jewish children were killed by the Nazis in World War II and a similar fate would have befallen hundreds of thousands of Jewish children in Israel had Iraq been allowed to implement its nuclear plans.

It was understood here that Begin offered the same argument in his letter to President Reagan justifying the Israeli raid. He sought to play down the Administration's strong condemnation of the attack and said he hoped the U.S. would understand Israel's motives once they had studied them.

Begin Says Would Do It Again

Begin made it clear that Israel would knock out nuclear installations in any Arab country if it decided that such installations could produce weapons to attack Israel. Asked if a similar strike might be launched against Libya which is reportedly building a nuclear facility, he replied, "Let's first deal with the meshuggener (lunatic) Saddam Hussein (President of Iraq). We'll deal with the other meshuggener another time." He was referring obviously to Libya's ruler, Col. Muammar Qaddafi.

Begin's running battle with Peres developed after Begin claimed on a radio interview Monday that the Labor Party leader wrote to him "three or four weeks ago" advising against the Iraqi operation. Peres replied that he had not opposed the planned raid but its original timing for May 10, the day of the French Presidential elections.

Today, Begin, in effect, called Peres a liar. He sent Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee

chairman Moshe Arens a copy of a confidential letter he said he received from Peres on May 10 in which Peres urged him not to order the strike. According to the letter released by Begin, the Labor Party leader wrote, "I speak from experience and there are others who think the same way I do. Israel would become isolated and lay herself open to similar attacks."

Begin said today that there was nothing in Peres' letter which indicated that he objected only to the timing of the air attack. Peres issued a sharply worded statement today criticizing Begin for releasing the text of a "personal letter." He said that this provided even more proof that Begin was pursuing electoral considerations rather than the national interest.

Gur Challenges Begin Stance

Peres said in his letter, which was handwritten and partially in coded phrases because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, that it would be the height of insensitivity to bomb the Iraqi reactor, built and maintained by French technicians, on the day of the French elections. He also reportedly informed Begin that his fellow Socialist, Francois Mitterrand, who won the election, had agreed to restrict French nuclear activities and that the new government in France should be given a chance to change its policy of selling nuclear material to Iraq.

The Labor Alignment accused Begin's government of making political capital of the raid. Its statement issued yesterday expressed "doubt and reservations about the political considerations, the timing and information pertaining to the destruction of the Iraqi reactor as given by the government yesterday" (Monday). Chaim Herzog, head of the Labor campaign committee, said on a television interview last night that election considerations had contributed to the timing of the attack.

The Labor statement suggested that "The helm of State be removed from Likud control because government decisions increase our fear that its responsibility and political considerations cannot be relied upon."

Gur replying to Begin's press conference remarks, said that because of the attacks on Israel for the Iraqi raid "by friends and foes alike", he had to "walk on hot coals" in his criticism of the government. But he focused on what he termed Begin's "light-hearted approach" to so serious a matter and his "humorous" comments in reply to reporters' questions. He said this called into question the credibility of the Premier and his colleagues in dealing with fateful matters.

Gur Says No Need For Early Raid

According to Gur, he had information that indicated that the nuclear reactor near Baghdad was not as close to completion as Begin had suggested. He said the air strike could have been ordered after the June 30 elections, noting that even if Likud was defeated, Begin and his Cabinet would remain in office for several months until a new government is sworn in.

Gur also protested Begin's "hysterical use of the threat of a holocaust. A month or so ago we heard of a holocaust of the Christians in Lebanon and now we

hear of the potential danger of a holocaust in Israel," Gur said.

However, Gur insisted that the use of American-made fighter bombers in the raid "was fully within the terms of Israel's right to self-defense."

SAUDI-BRITISH LONDON TALKS BOOSTED BY NEW BLAST AT ISRAEL

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, June 10 (JTA) -- Talks between British leaders and a top level Saudi Arabian delegation headed by King Khalid got off to a good start today following the British government's strong condemnation of Israel's air strike against Iraq's nuclear reactor Sunday and profuse praise for Saudi statesmanship voiced by the Queen at a State banquet for the Saudi royal visitor last night.

Khalid and his Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs lunched with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as her guests at No. 10 Downing Street today. The Ministers are also holding private talks with their British counterparts. The government nevertheless has been extremely nervous lest any last minute incident upset their notoriously sensitive guests. But the Israeli air strike at Iraq may make the Khalid visit more successful than his hosts had anticipated.

This may have added to the vehemence of Thatcher's condemnation of the Israeli raid shortly after the arrival of the Saudi party. She called it "a grave breach of international law" and rejected a suggestion by pro-Israel Labor MK Greville Janner that Israel had performed an international service by removing Iraq's nuclear capability. She said she would have used just as strong terms to condemn the aggressor if Israel had been the target of an attack.

Britain's strong reaction to the Israeli raid underscored the European dimensions of the Anglo-Saudi talks. Britain will shortly assume the rotating presidency of the European Economic Community (EEC) Council of Ministers. The Saudis are pressing the Europeans to come out even more strongly on behalf of the Palestinian cause.

Britain, for its part, is seeking important military and civilian orders from the wealthy Saudis. United Kingdom exports to Saudi Arabia will approach \$1 billion this year but are still far behind American and French sales to that country, particularly of military hardware and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, supporters and opponents of Israel clashed in the House of Commons yesterday. Janner, who is president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, intervened strongly on behalf of Israel but was shouted down by pro-Arab MPs led by Laborite Andrew Fauls.

DUTCH 'STRONGLY CONDEMN' ISRAELI RAID AS 'DANGEROUS'

AMSTERDAM, June 10 (JTA) -- The Dutch Government declared in an official statement today that it was "concerned" by the Israeli bombardment of the Iraqi nuclear plant Sunday, declaring that action "can only contribute to the increase of tension in the Middle East," and that it therefore "strongly condemns" the raid.

Earlier the Dutch Foreign Minister, Christoph Van Der Klaauw, who is currently on a visit to the five Arab countries of the Persian Gulf area on a fact-finding mission as current chairman of the European Foreign Ministers Council, strongly assailed the raid, in a speech in Abu Dhabi. He called the attack "irresponsible and dangerous."

He also said he had asked the ten members of the European Economic Community (EEC) to issue a joint communique condemning the raid. He said it was now in preparation.

Most Dutch newspapers joined in the criticism and asserted editorially that in the long run it might be "counter-productive" for Israel and "increasingly" isolated Israel from the rest of the world. Some newspapers said that the main reason Premier Menachem Begin ordered the Sunday attack was to win electoral support in the June 30 election.

ISRAEL BACKERS IN CONGRESS SUPPORT 'CUBAN ANALOGY' IN SUPPORTING REACTOR RAID

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, June 10 (JTA) -- Congressional supporters of Israel are stressing the "Cuban analogy" in arguing that Israel did not violate United States law in using American-made weapons to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor Sunday.

This argument maintained that Israel's action was no different than what the U.S. threatened to do in 1962 when Cuba was installing Soviet made missiles with nuclear warheads. But when this analogy was offered to the State Department spokesman Dean Fischer today he replied, "I don't want to make any comparisons."

Meanwhile Fischer maintained that "no decision of any kind has been made" on whether the U.S. will take any action against Israel to follow up its condemnation of Sunday's raid. He said this included whether to hold up delivery of the four F-16's scheduled to be sent to Israel Friday.

Israel used eight F-16s escorted by six F-15s to bomb the nuclear plant. It was at first reported here that Israel had used the older Phantom F-4s for the mission.

President Reagan has held two meetings of the National Security Council on the Israeli bombing, one last night and the other this morning. Secretary of State Alexander Haig was scheduled to leave for Asia tonight and it is possible, according to Fischer, that a decision on U.S. action may not be made until he returns.

Only One Decision, Says Fischer

In fact, Fischer said, the only decision that has been made is to send to Congress a report on whether Israel violated U.S. law in using American-made equipment on the raid. He said the report will go to Congress late today or tomorrow.

The Arms Export Control Act, according to Fischer, "requires the President to report promptly to the Congress on the receipt of information that a substantial violation of the agreement under which the defense articles have been sold to a foreign government may have occurred." This is all the law requires, Fischer said.

The "Cuban analogy" has been stressed by Senate Minority Whip Alan Cranston (D. Calif.) who declared yesterday that the Israeli action was "inevitable" and said that he had long warned of the danger of the Iraqi reactor.

In an article in the New York Times today, Cranston, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that Israel felt a danger that was "similar" to that faced by the Kennedy administration when "a hostile unstable country near our border-- Cuba -- was developing, with Soviet aid, a nuclear strike capability."

An even stronger statement was made on the house floor today by Rep. Tom Lantos (D. Calif.)

who said, "Israel did exactly what we would do in our part of the world" if an unfriendly neighboring country posed a nuclear threat to the U.S.

Lantos, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, noted that all Americans supported President Kennedy when he planned a pre-emptive strike to take out the missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba. He said that there would be support for Reagan if he threatened to take similar action if he faced the same threat from Cuba today. Lantos added that Israel provided a "vital lesson" for all democratic countries and should be "applauded" for its actions instead of being criticized by many in Washington.

Support for Israel also came today from Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D. Ohio), who said that Israel had hard choices but "what Israel did may have been the most responsible action of all." He said that Israel had to confront the prospect of an Iraqi nuclear bomb. No other country was willing to do more than make protests. "Had Israel waited till the plant was operational," Metzenbaum noted, "she would have had two alternatives -- either to sit back helplessly while Iraq built the bomb or to attack the facility and risk inflicting untold deaths and suffering by the radioactive contamination of Iraq's most heavily populated areas."

Bingham Denounces World Inaction

Rep. Jonathan Bingham (D. N.Y.) said there would not have been the need for a pre-emptive strike by Israel "had the world community acted responsibly earlier to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, usable technology and materials. Instead the United States and its allies have made half hearted efforts at nuclear restraint, put far too much faith in international safeguards, and totally ignored the military implications of these actions. Israel could not afford to ignore them"

Bingham, member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, called for a non-proliferation policy with "teeth" to prevent the export of nuclear material that can be used in making weapons and which would improve the methods of guarding against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the State Department today, Fischer said that the Reagan Administration has been reviewing the U.S. policy on non-proliferation as part of its review of all of its foreign policy.

AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS DEFEND ISRAEL, ASSAIL CRITICS

NEW YORK, June 10 (JTA) -- Leaders of major Jewish organizations issued statements today vigorously defending Israel's raid Sunday on Iraq's nuclear reactor and assailing critics of the attack for forcing Israel to act when other countries failed to do so.

Howard Squadron, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said it was not Israel, but "those Arab states -- including Iraq -- that persist in proclaiming themselves at war with a 'Zionist entity' they have pledged themselves to liquidate" which should be condemned.

Declaring that Iraq had made no secret "of its intention to use the nuclear capacity it was acquiring, against Israel," Squadron said the western countries that supplied Iraq with the material to produce nuclear weapons "disregarded Israel's expressions and warnings." He asked how anyone could be surprised "that Israel felt obliged to act in its own defense."

Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the American section of the World Zionist Organization, said that the Arab-Third World-Communist bloc, expecting Israel or the United States to stand by "helplessly" in the threat to Israel's survival, is "shocked" by an action "that prevents an assassin from carrying out his mission."

Citing the helplessness of the Jews in Nazi Europe, she said "this time, the Jews of Israel had a choice -- to act on the truth of Iraq's own words that 'the Iraqi nuclear reactor' was intended to be used against 'the Zionist entity.' Israel had no recourse" and "had every moral right" to knock out the reactor.

Rabbi Joseph P. Sternstein, president of the American Zionist Federation, criticized the State Department's "quick condemnation" of the raid, and asked "Is Israel to be consigned to a never-ending stream of advice and withhold action even when her vital interests are at stake?"

He too cited the statement by President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, in Oct. 1980, that the Baghdad reactor "was being built solely for use against the Zionist enemy." He said the Reagan Administration "should thank Israel for taking decisive action against the malevolent Iraqi regime."

Ivan J. Novick, president of the Zionist Organization of America, stressed "the realism of the situation" which was that "Iraq has never signed a cease-fire agreement" with Israel and considered itself in a state of war with the 'Zionist entity.'" Novick declared that until the Arab states recognized Israel's right to live in peace in the region, Israel "cannot be expected to ignore what it conceives to be mortal dangers."

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, declared that "thanks to the bravery and skill of Israel's airmen, the Middle East is no longer threatened by nuclear war." He added that Israel acted in self-defense "against a nuclear installation intended for her destruction."

He charged that Israel once again has become "the victim of the world's double standards of morality." Referring to the Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962 and President Kennedy's naval blockade, Rabbi Schindler declared that "if it is proper for Goliath to protect itself against a David, is not David to be allowed to defend himself against Goliath?"

Rabbi William Berkowitz, president of the Jewish National Fund, said Israel has been the victim, not the aggressor in the long Arab-Israeli conflict. He called the raid "a supreme act of self-defense" which he said he was certain would be "justified by history."

Maynard Wishner, president of the American Jewish Committee, declared that possession of an atomic bomb "by an aggressive, terrorist" Iraq "would constitute a threat to the stability of the entire Middle East as well as a mortal danger to the existence of Israel." He declared that "the target for condemnation" should be "the lack of international safeguards for the control of nuclear weapons" rather than "Israeli actions clearly necessary for her own defense."

Nathaniel Saperstein, president of the National Council of Young Israel, declared that "Israel used just the right amount of military force" against the Iraqi reactor, "against a sworn enemy bent on defying international law to intimidate and hopefully destroy the Jewish state."

Nathan Perlmutter, director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said, "Entebbe saved 103 lives. The Israelis now may have saved untold numbers of lives. Surely all concerned with nuclear proliferation will applaud this action."

'DEMOCRATIC FRONT' ATTRACTS ARABS AS FRONT FOR RAKAH

By Gil Sedan

(This is the fifth of a series of articles on the political parties in the June 30 elections.)

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality is a front for Israel's Rakah Communist Party. Its list for the June 30 Knesset elections indicates its growing "Arabization." Four of the first six candidates on the list are Arabs.

The "Front", which won 80,000 votes in the 1977 elections -- most of them Arab votes -- holds five seats in the present Knesset. It hopes to increase them to six. But political observers doubt that it will be as successful in the coming election as it was in the past.

Several Zionist parties are competing for the Arab vote, (The "Front" is non-Zionist), among them the Labor Alignment, Shinui and Moshe Dayan's Telem. The National Religious Party is also interested in the Arab vote and may gain some of such votes inasmuch as its traditional control of the Interior Ministry in coalition governments gives it control over the local authorities' budgets in the Arab sector.

All of those parties focus their criticism on the Communists. Their most effective argument is that if it is in the Arabs' interest to topple the Likud regime, the best way to do it is to vote Zionist rather than Communist.

The Communists also face a threat from Arab radical groups which, unlike the "Front", do not recognize Israel's right to exist as a separate Jewish entity. They are urging Israeli Arabs to boycott the election. The party recognized that to appeal to Arab voters it had to increase Arab representation. Hassan Bishara, a teacher from the Arab village of Tira, was assigned the sixth place on the "Front's" Knesset list.

The list is headed by veteran Communist leader Meir Wilner, followed by Toufik Toubi, a veteran Arab Communist. Third on the list is Black Panther Charlie Biton, fourth Mayor Tawfik Zayyad of Nazareth and fifth Mayor Mohammad Zeidan of Kufer Manda village near Nazareth.

The "Front" was formed before the 1977 elections by the Communists, the Black Panthers, a group representing Jewish slum-dwellers mainly of Oriental origin, and the Arab mayors. Others were such splinter groups as the "Israeli Socialist Left," "Leftist Front," the "Druze Initiative Committee" and several women's organizations. The intention was to create a broad base of such disparate groups to allow representation by bodies not identified with communism.

The "Front" is running on the same platform as in 1977 with one variation. It stresses that in the event of a peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors, West Jerusalem would be recognized as the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state with free access to the holy places of all faiths. Both sections of the city would cooperate in the provision of municipal services.

Other elements of the platform are: a just peace between Israel and the Arab countries; protection of the rights and interests of laborers; abolition of oppression and discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel; abolition of social discrimination; protection of democratic rights against the dangers of fascism; and protection of women's rights.

EYEWITNESSES SAY PLANES AVOIDED CIVILIAN AREAS

PARIS, June 10 (JTA) -- Israeli air craft scored direct hits and carefully avoided civilian installations, according to eye witness accounts today to the Israeli air attack on the Iraqi nuclear facility near Baghdad.

French technicians employed at the site in Tamuz arrived here today after having been recalled by the French Government. One technician remarked that the Israeli planes "aimed with remarkable precision their bombs which fell to within one meter (1 yard) of their target." Jacques Rimbaud, an employee of a civil engineering firm said, "It all lasted no more than 10 seconds."

Other technicians confirmed that the huge concrete dome which covered the reactor was "simply knocked off" but could not be certain about the actual damage inflicted on the reactor.

The more than 150 French technicians and engineers employed at the site are being evacuated to France except for a small number who will deal with the reactor's maintenance. The decision to evacuate was taken immediately after the Government's learning of the death of 25-year-old French engineer Damien Chaussepied.

Meanwhile, the French press continued to criticize the raid but Government sources were more moderate. The Elysee Palace Secretary, General Pierre Beregovoy, reported today that "no additional comments are needed" after the statements by Premier Pierre Mauroy, Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson and President Francois Mitterrand himself.

Speaking last night in Montelimar, President Mitterrand said that any violation of international law will automatically be condemned "in spite of our friendly ties" with Israel. Cheysson also tempered last night an earlier declaration by stressing that "Israel is a friend entitled to security ... and we will not change our basic attitude because of this intolerable act."

The Mitterrand Administration seemed determined to try to stop, at least for the time being, the public discussion and condemnation of Israel. It might raise the subject again however through diplomatic channels after the Israeli elections and the formation of a new Israeli Government.

SASSON DISCUSSES WITH SADAT SHARPLY CRITICIZED RAID

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- Egypt's President, Anwar Sadat, received today Israel's Ambassador, Moshe Sasson, for a discussion of Israel's Sunday air attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor. Sasson met for an hour with Sadat, giving him a personal message from Premier Begin. Sasson declined to tell newsmen about the content of the Begin note and described his meeting with Sadat as "candid and sincere."

The meeting with Sadat came in the wake of unprecedentedly strong criticism in Egypt against Israel. Sadat himself had called the attack "unlawful and contradicting the spirit of peace." Members of both the ruling party and the opposition party in Egypt expressed their opposition to the raid. Some demanded that Egypt freeze relations with Israel, deport Sasson and call back Egyptian envoy Sa'ad Mortada from Tel Aviv.

LATE NEWS BULLETIN

WASHINGTON -- President Reagan suspended delivery today of four F-16s to Israel in reaction to Israel's use of U.S.-made planes in its Iraqi raid.