

BACKGROUND REPORT

REAGAN ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT EXPECT 'BREAKTHROUGHS' IN AUTONOMY TALKS DURING REAGAN-BEGIN SUMMIT

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The Reagan Administration does not expect any "breakthroughs" in the autonomy negotiations during Israeli Premier Menachem Begin's visit here this week.

"I wouldn't see as a result of our discussions in the next few days that we are going to have any great breakthroughs," a senior Administration official said in briefing the press on the upcoming visit. But he stressed that "I hope and expect" that the talks this week would lead to substantive negotiations with Israel, Egypt and the U.S. "with an eye toward the earliest possible agreement."

Begin arrived in New York yesterday and will come to Washington Tuesday for talks with President Reagan Wednesday and Thursday. He will also meet with other Administration officials as well as members of Congress. (See separate story P.3)

At the briefing, the senior official stressed that when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited Washington last month he and the Administration held "preliminary discussions" on the autonomy negotiations for the West Bank and Gaza Strip and now "preliminary discussions" would also be held with Begin.

During Sadat's visit, both the Reagan Administration and the Egyptian leader agreed that no progress on the autonomy talks could be made until after Reagan met with Begin and then the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Jordan in the fall. But then Sadat and Begin met in Alexandria, Egypt, and agreed to resume the negotiations in Cairo Sept. 23 and 24.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig admitted on Aug. 28 that the U.S. was "pleasantly surprised" by the Sadat-Begin agreement. Noting this, the senior official said that during the talks with Begin here this week the U.S. will decide on the "level" of U.S. participation in the Cairo talks.

AWACS Sale on the Agenda

The Administration's proposal to sell AWACS reconnaissance planes and other sophisticated equipment to the Saudis will also be discussed during Begin's visit, the senior official said. The official sidestepped a question whether Begin is expected to make a public pitch against the proposal, but noted that both sides would make their views clear "privately" and said the U.S. "hopes to get a sympathetic hearing."

The official said the Administration will try to calm Israel's concern about the proposed sale and indicated that in past discussions and in the talks this week there may be U.S. proposals of additional aid to Israel.

Since this will be the first meeting between Reagan and Begin, the official said that a major purpose of the meeting is for the two leaders "to meet and know each other and to develop a friendship that will foster a close and productive working relationship." The establishment of a friendly relationship was considered the major achievement of Sadat's meetings with Reagan.

Lebanon Situation To Be Discussed

The official said that Lebanon will also be discussed and for that purpose Philip Habib, Reagan's special envoy for the crisis in that Arab country, will be present. The official said the discussions will concern the situation since the cease-fire established last month and the prospects for further progress "in those areas where Israel is involved and can be helpful."

The official stressed that the talks would include all of Lebanon not just south Lebanon. But he said that the Syrian missiles in Lebanon, which caused the crisis for which Habib was first sent to the Middle East last May is "not a forgotten issue."

Asked about the Israeli settlements on the West Bank, the official said if it comes up the U.S. will stress that it considers them a "political problem as we look at the future of the peace process." But he said there would be no discussion of their legality. The Carter Administration considered the settlements illegal. But the Reagan Administration has maintained it's a political, not a legal problem.

12 SOLONS URGE COLLEAGUES TO JOIN THEM IN SPONSORING A RESOLUTION TO REJECT SALE OF AWACS TO SAUDIS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4 (JTA) -- A dozen members of the Senate have asked their colleagues to join them in sponsoring a resolution to reject President Reagan's proposal to sell five AWACS reconnaissance planes and other sophisticated arms to Saudi Arabia.

"We strongly believe that this proposed sale is not in the best interests of the United States," the 12 said in a letter initiated by Sens. Bob Packwood (R. Ore.) and Henry Jackson (D. Wash.).

"This sale seriously risks jeopardizing our national security and further destabilizing the Middle East," Packwood said at a press conference at the Capitol. Packwood was the initiator of a letter on June 24, which 55 Senators sent Reagan urging him that he not send the arms package proposal to Congress. At the same time, more than 245 members of the House signed a resolution to reject the sale.

But Packwood conceded last Friday that only about 44 to 45 Senators are at present committed to rejecting the sale. He said that about 37 to 38 Senators support the President and the fight will be over 17 to 19 Senators who are presently undecided.

Congress will begin the 20-day informal notification period in which it can discuss the proposed sale when it returns from its summer recess on Wednesday. This will be followed by a 30-day formal notification period in which the Senate and the House must reject the sale in order to veto it.

Reasons For Opposing The Sale

The letter signed by a dozen Senators listed the reasons for opposing the sale as follows:

"It is unwise to sell our most sophisticated airborne surveillance systems to a non-democratic, potentially unstable nation because this could lead to compromise of our technology;

"It is unwise to accede to Saudi pressure for this sale in view of the absence of constructive participation by the Saudis in the Camp David peace process, the continued Saudi financing of PLO terrorism, and in view of Saudi policy that Israel is her number one enemy;

"And it is unwise to contravene assurances that the capabilities of the Saudi F-15s would not be enhanced and it is also unwise to rely on Saudi statements or assurances, in whatever form made, that AWACS--in any configuration--would not be employed against America's key friend in the region, Israel, in some future pan-Arab war."

Also signing the letter were Sens. Alan Cranston (D. Cal.), Roger Jenson (R. Iowa), Rudy Boschwitz (R. Minn.), David Pryor (D. Ark.), Bill Bradley (R. N.J.), Daniel Inouye (D. HI.) and Alfonse D'Amato (R. N.Y.).

Immediately joining in with the 12 Senators last Friday was Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D.N.Y.) who said the proposed sale "would only serve to destabilize an extremely volatile part of the world." Moynihan charged that the Administration has talked a great deal about secret negotiations to provide safeguards on the sale, "but there is precious little information in writing. This is not diplomacy, it is intrigue," he declared.

HAIG SAYS AWACS ISSUE WILL BE 'DISPOSED OF RAPIDLY' EARLY IN THE REAGAN-BEGIN SUMMIT TALKS

NEW YORK, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- Secretary of State Alexander Haig said discussion of the proposed U.S. sale of AWACS reconnaissance aircraft to Saudi Arabia "will come on probably early in the meeting" between President Reagan and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin in Washington Wednesday "and will be disposed of rapidly."

He said he thought "The President will understand Israel's natural concerns about any enhancement of Arab capabilities, especially in a neighboring Arab state" but that the AWACS sale "is in America's strategic interest" and "although difficult for Israel to accept, we feel it meets their interests as well."

Haig made his remarks in the course of an exclusive interview with the New York Times, published yesterday coincidental with Begin's arrival in New York with a large entourage of aides, including Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, and his chief autonomy negotiator, Interior Minister Yosef Burg.

Strategic Consensus In The Mideast

In reply to questions, Haig stressed that the U.S. continues to pursue a "strategic consensus" in the Middle East and that it recognized "there have been some fundamental changes since Camp David in the whole Middle East environment and situation."

He said that "one of those changes is now an interrelationship which has developed between the situation in Lebanon and the peace process, which while on totally separate tracks, are increasingly interrelated, and a failure or a collapse of one can have a serious impact on the other; whereas progress in one contributes to an atmosphere of progress in the other."

Haig said that the strategic consensus in the Middle East, "still in embryo but nonetheless existent," was saved from "collapse" by the efforts of U.S. special envoy Philip Habib to resolve the Syrian missile crisis. "That involved harnessing leadership and support from the Arab League, and with considerable help from Saudi Arabia not only in leadership and diplomacy but in resources which catalyzed certain processes," he said.

Criticizes Israel's Actions

Haig added that "the whole process was severely jolted" when Israel bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor last June and by "the subsequent increased violence along the border of Israel which involved Palestinians, the PLO and the Israeli forces." Nevertheless the consensus "managed to sustain itself in a very shaky way by some very skillful work by Phil (Habib) to produce a cessation of hostilities," Haig said.

Haig said the nature and extent of U.S. participation in the autonomy talks which Israel and Egypt have agreed to resume Sept. 23 on the ministerial level has not yet been decided. "There is still some uncertainty about this meeting in terms of location. We will participate, in any event, at whatever appropriate level we decide upon, and that should not be done until we have a little more information from both parties," Haig said. He added, "One of the outcomes of the Begin visit, we hope, is for a sharpening of our thinking on that subject."

Two Aspects To Begin's Visit

Haig said there were two aspects to the Begin visit. "We would want to discuss the peace process under the Camp David framework and specifically the autonomy talks... And the second part, clearly, will be on the Lebanon process, which is far more complex because of the multiplicity of interest in parties involved."

Haig said that "another final point" on the agenda of the Begin meeting is "a discussion of the bilateral relationships in the sense of the period ahead in a changing situation--strategic concerns--and whether or not we are going to reaffirm. There's been a lot of rhetoric in the past and I think both sides are interested in putting some meat on the bone for that rhetoric with respect to our bilateral strategic relationship," Haig said.

He said, in reply to questions that he was not talking about a defense treaty with Israel but "about practical cooperation... that will contribute to regional security."

Convincing Israel About The AWACS

Asked how Israel could be convinced that the AWACS sale would be in its own as well as American

interest, Haig said, "First and foremost, it brings America's presence." In that connection he observed that Israel has been "the bastion, and a rather lonely bastion historically, toward Soviet inroads in the Middle East. Historically, the United States has been somewhat less than that, and so in that context, this AWACS, the American presence with respect to it—even though being in a sovereign nation (Saudi Arabia) —should be owned with sovereignty in mind. It couldn't expect to be otherwise."

He added: "It is a manifestation of, among a number of other steps that we are considering with the RDF (Rapid Deployment Force) and not bases but facilities. That's a very important argument."

"Another very important argument is that it is in Israel's interest for someone else to provide Saudi Arabia with assistance, and we don't think so."

Before departing for the U.S. Sunday, Begin told reporters, "We are going to the U.S. with open hearts to hold talks with President Reagan and his advisors on international problems and most important bilateral questions. We hope these talks will be as customary between friends who have nothing to hide from each other, who speak openly and put forward their requests and questions. We hope they will end in a positive manner, for the good of both parties."

HECTIC SCHEDULE FOR BEGIN

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- Israeli Premier Menachem Begin will meet twice with President Reagan at the White House this week as well as with a host of other Administration officials and members of Congress.

Begin will be welcomed by the President at the White House Wednesday morning followed by a meeting by the two leaders. The President and Mrs. Reagan will host a dinner that night in honor of the visiting Israeli Premier. The two leaders will meet again early Thursday morning.

Begin will actually arrive in Washington tomorrow and will go immediately to Blair House where he will spend the day without any scheduled visits. The Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington plans to hold a demonstration outside Blair House to welcome the Israeli Premier.

After meeting with Reagan Wednesday morning, Begin will go to the State Department for a working lunch with Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Later he is scheduled to have separate meetings with Treasury Secretary Donald Regan and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.

After he concludes his meeting with Reagan Thursday, Begin is scheduled to meet with Vice President George Bush, have lunch with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, meet with the House Foreign Affairs Committee and meet separately with members of the Senate at the Blair House.

Begin will also hold a press conference Thursday morning and will be guest of honor at a dinner given by Israeli Ambassador Ephraim Evron at the National Portrait Gallery that night.

On Friday morning, Begin will have a breakfast meeting with Haig at Blair House and then has scheduled meetings with Sen. Henry Jackson (D. Wash.); The Rev. Jerry Falwell and other members of the Moral Majority; and Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO.

Begin leaves for New York Friday afternoon where he will remain until he goes back to Israel Sept. 15. While in New York, he is scheduled to appear on ABC-TV's "Meet the Press" program Sept. 13.

JDL DIRECTOR DENIES GROUP CALLING ITSELF 'THUNDER OF ZION' IS PART OF HIS ORGANIZATION

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The director of the Jewish Defense League denied today there are any militant factions in the JDL, after an anonymous group, calling itself "Thunder of Zion," and claiming to be "a militant faction" of the JDL, claimed responsibility for two firebomb incidents in Manhattan yesterday.

Arno Weinstein, the JDL Director, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency there are no "factions" in the JDL. But, he added, in the routine JDL reaction to such reports, that the JDL "applauded" the actions of the group in the hope they would focus attention on Soviet suppression of Jews.

Seven firebombs, including one that detonated, were placed in the area of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations, leading police officials to increase security precautions in the area on Manhattan's upper East Side.

In the other incident, police reported that a small bomb exploded at 1:40 a.m. at the Four Continent Book Store on lower Fifth Avenue, causing minor damage to the front window of the bookstore which sells books published in the Soviet Union. A caller told news agencies that "Thunder of Zion" claimed responsibility. The caller said the group was demanding the release of Soviet Jewish dissident Anatoly Shcharansky and "all Soviet Jews."

Like the JDL, local law enforcement officials said they had never heard of the group. A spokesman identified the group, in telephone calls as the "Thunder of Zion" wing of the JDL.

Series Of Bombing Actions

The bomb that went off in the Soviet Mission area had been placed under an empty car with diplomatic license plates, producing minor damage. The car, however was registered to the Nigerian Mission to the UN.

Two of the six firebombs had been placed under unoccupied Soviet Mission cars parked near the mission building. They had failed to go off because their lighted fuses went out, police said. The four other bombs were found in a litter basket near the mission building and were removed without incident by the police bomb squad.

Patrick Murphy, police department chief of operations, said after the bombs were found that the regular around-the-clock four-man security detail for the Soviet Mission was being expanded by three more officers on each shift. He also said unspecified anti-crime measures were being increased.

He said the bombings indicated "a step up from the usual harassment" of abusive telephone calls, including bomb threats, to the Soviet Mission. Joseph Valiquette, a special agent of the New York office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said his agency was conducting "a very active" investigation of the bomb incidents.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA
EUROPEAN RABBIS URGE ALL INVOLVED
IN CITY OF DAVID DIG CONTROVERSY
'TO ABSTAIN FROM VIOLENCE'

Edwin Eytan

BUCHAREST, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The standing committee of the Conference of European Rabbis, now meeting here, has called on all those in Israel involved in the controversy over the archaeological excavations at the City of David in Jerusalem "to abstain from violence" and to use "goodwill and persuasion" to further their views.

The Conference, which includes Chief Rabbis from more than six European countries, issued a unanimous declaration expressing its "growing concern" about the verbal and physical clashes between members of the religious and secular communities in Jerusalem over the dig, and asking for "moderation."

The dozens of rabbis, teachers and community leaders attending this first-ever major Jewish meeting in an East European country, have been meeting here since last Wednesday at the invitation of Rumania's Chief Rabbi, Dr. Moses Rosen.

The declaration on the City of David dig was issued after less than two hours discussion. A prominent Chief Rabbi told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that "this was the furthest we could go in disassociating ourselves from the extremist elements in Jerusalem." He explained that the declaration's appeal for moderation was addressed to all the parties involved in the controversy, but especially to the leaders of the religious community. Several of the participants at the gathering told the JTA that the appeal is also a call to end coercion in any form.

Issue of Soviet Dropouts

The participants at the Conference meeting, who are touring parts of the country today to meet with members of Jewish communities, are due to discuss tomorrow the issue of Soviet Jews who decide, once they arrive in Vienna after having received their exit permit, to settle in Western countries other than Israel. Rosen favors cutting off aid to these dropouts, but most of the other rabbis, including Britain's Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovitz, plan to issue an appeal for continuing aid to the dropouts by such organizations as HIAS.

Situation of Rumanian Jews

At its session yesterday, the Conference paid tribute to Rosen for enabling the participants to meet here and also addressed its appreciation to the Rumanian authorities and President Nicolae Ceausescu for their friendly attitude toward Rumanian Jews. Many of the participants, in Rumania for the first time, were surprised and moved by the deep religious and cultural Jewish life which continues to exist despite the dwindling number of Jews in the country: some 33,000 from a post-war peak of 400,000.

Addressing the meeting, Rosen said: "It is rare, if not unique, for a rabbi to be happy to see his community steadily diminishing. Over the last 33 years some 95 percent of Rumania's Jews went to Israel." He stressed that they "did not emigrate. They left for Israel." He also pointed to the paradoxical situation that prevails in this country with regard to the Jews.

According to Rumanian laws, no religious nor national group is allowed to operate educational institutions, receive money from abroad, organize and publish an independent newspaper or be involved in politics as an independent group, Rosen observed. "And yet, we do all these things, not against Rumanian

authorities but with their agreement and their active help," he said. He noted that "no one can even imagine that the country's Catholics can recite prayers for Rome as we do for Jerusalem, or for the Vatican as we do for the State of Israel."

Some Moving Incidents

On Saturday night the Conference members attended a performance of the Jewish Theater of Bucharest. The first Jewish theater in the world was started over 100 years ago in Bucharest. Today, the audience which regularly attends the theater and the theatrical troupe are only a fragment of what they were even a dozen years ago, but the theater, which is subsidized by the government, still puts on performances five nights a week.

Several Jewish choirs, including the Menorah Ensemble, entertained the participants. One of the most moving moments was at the conclusion of Friday night's ceremony in Bucharest's Choral Temple where a five-year-old girl recited the traditional Aleph Beth with more conviction and deeper feeling than in many larger and far more prosperous communities elsewhere.

U.S. SAYS IT HAD DENIED

A VISA TO CAPUCCI

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The State Department said that its U.S. Embassy in Rome denied a visa to Archbishop Hilarion Capucci, the former Melkite Archbishop of Jerusalem, to visit the United States because of his 1974 conviction in Israel for gun smuggling.

State Department spokesman Dean Fischer said that the Emigration and Naturalization Act makes "ineligible" for admission to the United States persons who "advocate or teach violence." He said that Capucci's conviction in Israel "renders him ineligible." Fischer said the decision was made in Rome by a Consular officer there on the basis of an opinion from the State Department.

Capucci, a supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was released from prison at the Vatican's request on condition that he take no part in anti-Israel activities. He played a prominent role in speaking to American hostages who were held in Teheran.

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TEL AVIV (JTA) -- The arrival of four American-built F-16 planes last Thursday brought to a final end the embargo on delivery of 14 F-16s and three F-15s. All 14 planes of the F-16 type and three F-15s, delivery of which had been held up by the Reagan Administration for weeks following Israel's raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor and the bombing of terrorist headquarters in Beirut, have now arrived in Israel. The aircraft are now being painted with Israel Air Force insignia and incorporated with the Air Force.

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TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Film star Ingrid Bergman arrived in Israel last Friday to study background material in preparation for playing the role of Golda Meir in a forthcoming American television production. Leonard Nimoy, who played the part of Mr. Spock in the "Star Trek" TV series, also arrived in Israel last week to study for the part as Golda's husband.