

SHARON SAYS THE ARMY WILL BEGIN REMOVING MILITANTS FROM NORTH SINAI

By Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, March 2 (JTA) — Defense Minister Ariel Sharon told the Knesset today that the army would start tomorrow to remove militants from northern Sinai. He spoke during a debate on a Tehiya motion of no confidence in the government. The motion was defeated by a vote of 58-3. There were 43 abstentions, by the Labor Alignment and the Communist Party.

The motion was prompted by the setting up of roadblocks last Friday to prevent infiltration of Sinai by supporters of the movement to halt Israel's withdrawal, scheduled to be completed by April 25. Hundreds, possibly thousands of squatters, mostly Orthodox Jews from West Bank settlements, have occupied abandoned houses in Yamit and other settlements in recent weeks with the intention to force the government to abandon its evacuation plans.

Sharon disclosed that the army has already begun removing militant yeshiva students who recently moved into Ophira in southern Sinai. The debate today was highly emotional, with religious MKs charging that the army had desecrated the Sabbath by setting up roadblocks after sundown Friday. But the only votes cast for the no confidence measure were by the two members of the ultra-nationalist Tehiya faction and Rabbi Haim Druckman, of the National Religious Party, who announced today that he was resigning from the Knesset. (See separate story.)

Move To Prevent Infiltration

Meanwhile, two brigades of Israeli soldiers have been diverted from their normal duties and training exercises to man roadblocks on the approaches to Sinai. Their purpose is to prevent infiltration into the area around Yamit by militants opposed to Israel's withdrawal from Sinai.

But the militants, mainly Orthodox Jews from West Bank settlements, say that thousands of their numbers have easily by-passed the roadblocks and entered the region by crawling through fields, over sand dunes and cutting through chain-link fences. Although the roadblocks created an uproar among the Yamit settlers when they were put in place last Friday, the area has been quiet since then. Soldiers are said to be making only cursory checks of civilian traffic moving south.

Some 2000 "guests" from other regions managed to attend the wedding yesterday of a Yamit militant, Misha Mishkin, although the army had stated they would be barred from the area. How many of them left after the wedding is not known, but the feeling is that most if not all, stayed.

Also yesterday, 23 persons, all from the religious township of Kiryat Arba on the West Bank, were arrested after some 200 militants battled police attempting to set up roadblocks near Yamit. They were to have faced a military court today. But the trial was "postponed." At least two of the detainees managed to escape and turned up at the Mishkin wedding.

DRUCKMAN RESIGNS FROM LIKUD COALITION, BUT NOT THE NRP

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 2 (JTA) — Premier Menachem Begin's Likud-led coalition will lose its one seat majority in the Knesset with the resignation of Rabbi Haim Druckman, a member of the National Religious Party who is Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs.

Druckman, an active opponent of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai, announced today that he was quitting the Knesset—though not the NRP — because he could not support the government's intention to carry out the withdrawal next month. He said he would submit his letter of resignation to Interior Minister Yosef Burg when the latter returns from an overseas trip later this week.

Druckman, an ardent supporter of the Gush Emunim, recently toured the United States with a group of Israelis opposed to the Sinai withdrawal. His lobbying against the government's policy among American Jews brought him under severe criticism at home. But Begin defended his right to advocate his views. In his letter to Burg, Druckman stated that he could no longer be part of a government that withdraws from "an integral part of Eretz Israel."

The NRP, Begin's largest coalition partner, is not expected to force Druckman out of the party because he represents a relatively large constituency of NRP voters. The coalition, meanwhile, is expected to make major efforts to convince the two-member Telem faction to join the coalition in order to restore its Knesset majority. Telem was founded by the late Moshe Dayan shortly before last June's Knesset elections.

MITTERRAND SAYS HE WILL NOT BECOME MEDIATOR IN THE MIDEAST CRISIS

By Lisa Palmieri-Billig

ROME, March 2 (JTA) — President Francois Mitterrand of France said here that his country "does not intend ... to become an umpire or mediator in the Middle East crisis." Speaking to reporters here after an audience with Pope John Paul II yesterday, on the eve of his first official visit to Israel, Mitterrand declared: "We are tied by friendly relations with the Arab countries and with the Jewish State and I am not willing to trade one friendship with the other."

The French President, who is due in Israel tomorrow for a 50-hour state visit, added: "I reaffirm, in any case, the right to existence of the State (of Israel) which must obtain from international society the guarantees which will permit it to live in peace."

Mitterrand said he does not agree with all of Israel's policies, but observed, "If I had to approve the policies of every country I went to, I wouldn't go anywhere." It is believed he expressed to the Pope the same views about Israel and the Middle East situation as he related to the journalists. The Pope reportedly mentioned the Vatican's well known position in favor of "internationalization" of the holy places in Jerusalem.

WEST GERMANY TO DECIDE WHETHER IT SHOULD MODIFY ITS ARMS SALES POLICY

By David Kantor

BONN, March 2 (JTA) — Experts of the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its junior coalition partner, the Free Democrats, will hold a special meeting next week to decide whether to support any deviation from West Germany's long-standing policy of not selling weapons to countries in "areas of tension."

The government, and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, have been pressing in recent months for a relaxation of that rule in the case of Saudi Arabia. While members of both coalition parties concede that the government alone is in charge of arms exports, they demand a voice in the special consultative body on the subject.

The debate has been prompted by the pending arms deal with the Saudis who are interested in buying the recently updated model of Germany's Leopard II tank and scores of other weapons systems. The Saudi government has been negotiating for the past two years with arms manufacturers in West Germany. Agreements have been reached with two producers involving the Leopard tanks. All that is required to consummate a deal is political approval.

Schmidt is said to be campaigning within his own party for a modification of the arms sales rules. But with the coalition in trouble on both domestic and foreign policy fronts, he is not likely to provoke a quarrel with opponents of arms sales to the Saudis.

Meanwhile, Hans-Juergen Wischniewski, one of the architect's of Bonn's pro-Arab policies, has accused Premier Menachem Begin of disturbing efforts to improve West German-Israeli relations. Wischniewski, an aide to the Chancellor, was referring to Begin's attack on Schmidt last week for having allegedly told a Paris periodical that he would not visit Israel unless Begin apologized for his personal attack last June.

Begin exhorted Schmidt to "get down on his knees and beg forgiveness" of the Jewish people for Nazi crimes against them and vowed he would never apologize. Wischniewski said Begin's latest attack on Schmidt was based on a false newspaper report. Government sources said Schmidt did not consider a trip to Israel to be consistent with his Middle East policies. He was first invited there in 1975 and again in 1977.

MET MUSEUM TO EXHIBIT ISRAELI ARTIFACTS, BUT IT WILL BE SHOW PLANNED BY SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

NEW YORK, March 2 (JTA) — The Metropolitan Museum of Art has reconsidered its decision to cancel an exhibit of Israeli archaeological material and will now go ahead and mount the show, museum officials said. However, the show will be that planned by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service rather than the one the museum was to have mounted originally.

The museum's reversal followed an exchange of letters between Mayor Edward Koch and Douglas Dillon, chairman of the museum's board of directors. Koch charged that the museum had "surrendered" the political freedom "conferred on the arts and cultural institutions" and had "subordinated curatorial considerations to political hallucinations and speculative fears of reprisals by terrorists."

Koch was referring to the museum's announcement last week that it was cancelling the exhibit

because some of the artifacts came from the West Bank, which the museum described as "disputed territory," and that showing the artifacts would involve "security risks from radical elements." Spokesmen for major Jewish organizations denounced the museum's decision as capitulation to fear and pressure.

Dillon, in his response to Koch, said, "The Met is and remains firmly committed to the fundamental doctrine that curatorial and cultural decisions must not be politicized." He added that the museum would now work "with our colleagues in Israel" and with the Smithsonian Institution to move quickly towards a solution.

But Shmuel Moyal, spokesman for the Israel Consulate in New York, said today, "To the best of my knowledge and recollection, the representatives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art have not made any contact with the representatives of Israel since last July, 1981."

Metropolitan president William Macomber said yesterday that if the Smithsonian show, due in 1984, does not materialize, the Met will stage its original show as planned. The show includes artifacts from the earliest times to the Crusades.

EFFORT BEING MADE TO IMPROVE ZIONIST ACTIVITIES IN THE U.S.

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 2 (JTA) — In an effort to improve and streamline Zionist activities in the United States, the World Zionist Organization Executive, which met for two days in Arad, Israel, last week, is seeking a structural change in the work of American Zionist organizations.

Rabbi Joseph Stemstein, president of the American Zionist Federation, who has just returned from the meeting in Arad, told a press conference today that the structural change will involve the creation of "a unified and coordinated structure of Zionist leadership, in place of the current two-pronged set-up which comprises the AZF and the American Section of the WZO." He stressed, however, in response to a question, that no merger of the two bodies is intended.

Another objective of the structural revision, Stemstein said, "is to vest greater control and authority in the American Zionist leadership."

Gap Between Investments And Achievements

Stemstein, claiming that "tens of millions of dollars" are being spent each year for Zionist activities in America — mainly for education, aliya and public information — said that for a long time now there has been a gap between the efforts invested and the results achieved. Therefore, in an effort to remedy the situation, "the large networks of existing Zionist organizations in the United States should be harmonized and coordinated with a systematically programmed effort of World Zionist departmental activity, much of which is embodied in a substantial corps of shlichim (emissaries)," Stemstein said.

He said that it is important to enlarge and in many cases institute an active Zionist presence in the local Jewish communities in America. "Serious discussions concerning the present state of American Jewry was the background against which these decisions were made," Stemstein declared, adding: "The need for greater control by our American Zionist leadership was underscored by the changing of American Jewish circumstances."

HAIG URGES ISRAEL AND ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN LEBANON TO EXERCISE 'RESTRAINT AND MODERATION'

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 2 (JTA) — Secretary of State Alexander Haig said today that while the U.S. "understood" the concern of Israel over the re-arming of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon and increased terrorist acts, he urged Israel and all parties involved in Lebanon to exercise "restraint and moderation."

Haig, answering questions before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, did not answer directly when asked if he thought Israel is planning to take military action in south Lebanon. He noted that Philip Habib, President Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East, who is now in Syria, is urging all sides not to violate "the letter or the spirit" of the cease-fire across the Israeli-Lebanese border which Habib helped establish last July.

"Actions on either side of the border between Lebanon and Israel which exacerbate tension are not welcome and must be avoided at all costs," Haig told the Committee. He said it was "too early" to say if Habib had resolved "the contemporary tension" for which purpose he went on his fifth trip to the region since last May.

Cites Unsettling Developments For Israel

The Secretary noted that after the cease-fire in July, "both sides tended to improve their respective positions." But he said he understood that it was "unsettling" for Israel to see the PLO being re-armed with artillery, sophisticated rocketry and what he called some "antiquated" tanks. Also unsettling for Israel, he said, was the resumption of some terrorist activity that came from Lebanon through Syria and Jordan into the West Bank.

Haig did not respond when Rep. Paul Findley (R. Ill.) said the only way to prevent Israel from crossing the Lebanese border is for President Reagan to personally warn Premier Menachem Begin against any such action.

Haig rejected the contention of Rep. William Broomfield (R. Mich.), the ranking minority member of the committee, that the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated. He said foreign policy should not be dated from the time the Reagan Administration took office little more than a year ago.

No Alternative To Camp David

As he has frequently stressed in the past, Haig said the autonomy talks between Israel and Egypt are now going on and a Sinai peace-keeping force is ready to take over when Israel withdraws on April 25, although Egypt and Israel had been deadlocked over those issues when the Administration took office.

He said Egypt and Israel are now "talking about means of bridging differences" rather than just airing their differences themselves. Haig stressed that the U.S., as well as Israel and Egypt, is committed to the Camp David process because "there is no alternative process" that has a chance of bringing peace to the Middle East.

But, he noted, both Egypt and Israel are now going through a difficult time. He said that for Egypt, the death of President Anwar Sadat means that his successor, President Hosni Mubarak, has to assert his own policies. For Israel, this is a "traumatic" time, Haig said. He explained that this is not only because Israel is giving up Sinai but also has to uproot Jewish settlers there.

On other matters, Haig repeated the Reagan Administration's contention that it does not have a formal request from Jordan for F-16 jet fighters or Hawk mobile-air defense systems. He suggested that there may not even be a formal request. However, he noted that King Hussein of Jordan, in a television appearance last Sunday, seemed to imply that Jordan is about to make its request for arms to the U.S.

Haig said the U.S. understood why Israel would be concerned by arms requests from Arab countries that do not recognize Israel and are still in a state of war with it. But, he said, it is not in the interests of the U.S. or of Israel "to have moderate Arabs receive arms from the Soviet Union."

He explained that the Soviet SAM-8 mobile anti-aircraft missiles which Hussein has bought are better than similar U.S. weapons and that if Jordan buys weapons from the Soviets, there will be no American influence as to the use of those weapons.

Saudi Denies Agreement On AWACS

Meanwhile, in a related Mideast development, Defense Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia denied signing any agreement on conditions covering the manning and use of five AWACS aircraft it bought from the U.S.

The London-based daily, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, reported yesterday that the prince dismissed the reported signing as "lies which are circulated by certain news agencies under pressure from Zionist elements." He was commenting on reports from Washington that he had signed an agreement during a trip to Saudi Arabia by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger last month.

In another development, more than 100 soldiers of Fort Bragg's 1st Corps Support Command left North Carolina yesterday for Egypt to help oversee Israel's return of the Sinai to Egypt. Another 800 Americans, from the 82nd Airborne Division, will join the group later. The soldiers will become part of the multinational peacekeeping force in Sinai.

BEGIN: LET'S UNITE FOR PEACE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 2 (JTA) — Premier Menachem Begin called on the people of Israel today to unite on the road to peace and the prevention of war. He said his government was determined to prevent civil war.

Begin was summing up the bitter, emotional debate on a Tehiya motion of no confidence over the government's efforts to prevent militants from blocking Israel's withdrawal from Sinai. The motion was overwhelmingly defeated. (See separate story P.I.)

Begin said that despite the pain involved, he would pursue his policy of honoring the Camp David agreements and the peace treaty with Egypt. He said he was working "in perfect harmony with (Defense Minister) Ariel Sharon and Chief of Staff Gen. (Rafael) Eitan" in that direction.

Begin devoted much of his speech to rejecting charges by Tehiya and some religious MKs that the army had violated the Sabbath by setting up roadblocks at the approaches to Sinai last Friday evening. He called those who complained of desecration "hypocrites," declaring it was a "mitzvah" to desecrate the Sabbath on this occasion because the army roadblocks were intended to prevent bloodshed.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — About 13 yeshiva students clashed violently with several dozen Arab worshippers emerging from evening prayers at the El Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount Tuesday evening.

BACKGROUND REPORT PLO WOOLING AMERICAN CLERGYMEN BY FINANCING TRIPS TO LEBANON

NEW YORK, March 2 (JTA) — A concerted effort by the Palestine Liberation Organization to entice Christian clergymen in the United States to visit Lebanon, with all expenses paid for by the PLO, has sparked a bitter controversy between conservative fundamentalist Christian leaders who are opposed to the PLO play and liberal ministers who appear to be taking the bait.

At the same time, leaders of major Jewish organizations have assailed liberal ministers who have already visited Lebanon under the auspices of the PLO and have expressed concern that such visits would tend to legitimize the terrorist organization and lend credence to its anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist propaganda.

Praise For Arafat

The controversy erupted last month when five Seattle ministers went to Lebanon at the invitation of the PLO and returned with praise for the Palestinian cause. The ministers said they recoiled at the violence in Lebanon, where the PLO has bases, but were touched by what they heard during their meeting with PLO chief Yasir Arafat.

The Rev. Richard Young, of the Campus Christian Ministry, said upon his return from Lebanon: "The Palestinians are now trying to achieve by political means what they failed to achieve by military means. I think we ought to encourage that."

Rev. Rodney Romney, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Seattle, commented that Arafat impressed him as a "magnetic leader with an electrifying personality." He said, "I can't think of any time I've met anyone so completely dedicated to a cause." He added: "I feel a strong sense of commitment to work any way I can for the cause of justice for the Palestinian people."

Rev. William Cate, head of the Church Council of Greater Seattle, said the trip confirmed his suspicions that the American news media isn't telling the whole story of the Mideast war. "We have seen the other side of the story," he said. "If there is going to be a solution, this story has to be considered." The ministers agreed that the Palestinians need a homeland, and that homeland should be on the West Bank.

Fundamentalists Blast Ministers

These ministers and the others who took the trip were blasted by eight fundamentalist Christian leaders who described the PLO as "the world's most ruthless terrorist band." Douglas Shearer, a painting contractor from Sacramento, Calif., who belongs to TAV Evangelical Ministries, a Sacramento-based pro-Israeli Christian group, said: "We want the Seattle area to understand that these five Christian ministers (who went to Lebanon) do not represent the views of Seattle area Christians."

The Rev. Dwight Kinman, a Tacoma hospital chaplain, said Christians all over the world should support Israel. Douglas Krieger of TAV Evangelical Ministries, declared: "God's plan is for Israel to exist as a nation." Shearer stated that peace was not possible in the Middle East "until the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and recognizes Israel as an entity."

In support of their stand, TAV Evangelical Ministries last month purchased a large advertisement in The Seattle Times with a long list of endorsers, many of them leading evangelical clergymen from California to British Columbia in Canada. The

ad, which noted that the story of the PLO-financed trip was broken in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer by reporter Eric Nalder, stated, in part:

"We Evangelical Christians do NOT condemn the trip itself. Certainly, the clergymen can justifiably lay claim to a right and perhaps even a moral obligation to independently ascertain the veracity of the accusations. However, we find unconscionable the use of PLO funds ... We deeply regret the obvious imputation of Christian legitimacy to one of the world's most ruthless and unprincipled terrorist bands. We protest against an almost complete lack of discretion—a crude insensitivity which has joined the name of the Prince of Peace to brutality, cowardice, and implacable cruelty."

Trip Assailed By Jewish Leaders

The PLO-sponsored trip was also assailed by spokesmen for Seattle area Jewish organizations. Dr. Michael Schuffler, chairman of the Federation's Community Relations Committee, said: "This trip by a group of Christian clergymen is immoral. Money for the trip (was provided by a bunch of murderers)."

Dr. Arthur Abramson, director of the Seattle chapter of the American Jewish Committee, stated: "That Christian ministers of the Gospel, committed to peace and reconciliation, could take a trip sponsored and paid for by a group committed to the destruction of innocent civilians, both Christians and Jews, is inconceivable." He noted that the trip "cannot avoid helping legitimize" the PLO and plays "into the hands of both America's and Israel's enemies."

David Stahl, director of the Northwest Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said: "It is difficult for me to comprehend how individuals who are taken on a PLO financially-sponsored trip and only offered a select diet of interviews and experiences can return with a clear understanding of the multifaceted conflict" in Lebanon. He also said he was disturbed by the "gentle" way the ministers described Arafat on their return.

Background Of The Trip

In his pastoral letter to his congregation, Romney described the trip to Lebanon as a venture "financed by the Institute for Palestinian Studies and the Palestine Research Center in Beirut." He did not mention the PLO connection.

The Palestine Research Center is a PLO-sponsored organization, headed by top PLO leaders, according to Hisham Sharabi, editor of the Journal of Palestine Studies in Washington, D.C. The Institute for Palestinian Studies is an independent organization financed by the Kuwaiti government and some wealthy Lebanese, Nalder reported in The Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

According to Nalder, the trip was arranged locally "by two U.S. citizens who were born in the Middle East. Fawzi Khoury, a Lebanese-born Christian who runs the Near Eastern library at the University of Washington, got the ball rolling when he suggested to a brother living in France that a tour would be a good idea."

The other organizer, Nalder reported, was Farhat Ziadeh, a Palestinian who was born on the West Bank and is now chairman of the University of Washington's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature.

Khouri and Ziadeh, who are not members of the PLO, Nalder said, claimed they didn't know anything about the PLO connection, but Khouri said airline tickets were provided by the Palestine Research Center and the Institute for Palestinian Studies.