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ISRAEL SHOWING INCREASING FLEXIBILITY ON REMAINING ISSUES PREVENTING FULL APPROVAL OF PLANS TO EVACUATE TERRORISTS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- The Israel Cabinet, at its regular weekly session today, reportedly softened substantially Israel's stand on remaining unresolved issues preventing full approval of U.S. mediator Philip Habib's plan for evacuating Palestine Liberation Organization terrorists from Beirut where Israeli forces have clamped a steel ring around them.

Cabinet Secretary Dan Meridor, reporting to reporters at the end of the session, said there were "prospects" for the evacuation but such an agreement on Israel's part is not yet definite. The Cabinet convened to discuss the two-hour meeting earlier today between Habib and Premier Menachem Begin, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Meridor said there was progress in the negotiations after Israel showed "flexibility" on a number of points. The cease-fire in west Beirut demanded of Israel by President Reagan last Thursday remained in effect today for a third day.

The issues raised by Habib in his talks with Begin, Sharon and Shamir indicated that differences remained despite signs at the end of last week that the terrorists were ready to start moving out of west Beirut headed for havens in several Arab countries.

Despite the well-publicized Israeli objections, the Cabinet session took place in an atmosphere of optimism, observers reported. The feeling in Jerusalem was that the difficulties were largely technical and that evacuation would in fact begin this week.

A Number of Unsettled Issues

One of the reported still unsettled issues was the PLO's refusal to provide Israel with a full list of the evacuees. The PLO reportedly handed Habib only a general list, with a breakdown based on the countries offering the terrorists sanctuary.

Israel reportedly was prepared to show flexibility on that issue if an appropriate apparatus was created to supervise the evacuation process.

A second difficulty was differences over the total of evacuees. Israel claims that the current total is around 13,000 terrorists. Israel contended the total number of the evacuees should include about 3,500 members of Lebanese leftist groups and 1,500 troops in the Syrian occupation forces. Israeli officials have expressed fears that, without evacuation of all terrorists, regardless of identity, the PLO could leave in place a core that could serve as a base for the restoration of a terrorist organization.

A third problem concerns deployment of the multinational force which is to take up positions between the departing terrorists and Israeli troop positions. The PLO wants the units of the force to take positions in Beirut simultaneously with the evacuation, reportedly to make sure that the Israelis do not seize the opportunity to attack the terrorists as they are leaving.

Israel continues to insist that the international force enter Beirut only at the final stage of the evacuation. The PLO rejected an Israeli offer to allow a number of Lebanese army troops to enter west Beirut immediately at the beginning of terrorist withdrawal, reportedly fearing this would give the Christian warriors a chance to attack the terrorists. The PLO insists that the scheduled 350 French members of the international force be the first to enter.

Israeli officials reportedly said Israel was willing to show flexibility on that issue, too, on condition that the countries participating in the force -- the United States, France and Italy -- undertake to guarantee in writing that the terrorists will not be allowed to use the units of the international force as a shield and that, if the evacuation is interrupted for any reason, the force will not prevent the Israeli Defense Forces from acting to assure completion of the evacuation.

The fourth problem is Israel's continued refusal to allow United Nations observers in Beirut. There are currently some 20 such observers serving with UN units staffing buffer zones and the United States favors at least a symbolic UN observer presence in the evacuation process, to show some linkage between the evacuation, the international force and the UN.

Other obstacles include the PLO's refusal to free immediately an Israeli pilot, Aharon Achiaz, believed to be held by the terrorists in west Beirut; and to release the bodies of nine Israeli soldiers killed in the Litani operations in Lebanon three years ago and in the current fighting.

Israel has demanded that the return of the pilot and the bodies take place simultaneously with the start of the evacuation. The PLO has insisted that negotiations begin on the basis of exchange of prisoners, with Red Cross mediation. Israel holds thousands of Palestinian prisoners.

LITTLE CIVILIAN DAMAGE IN LEBANON, ACCORDING TO FIVE U.S. MILITARY MEN WHO VISITED THE COUNTRY
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Five retired American army generals who have just completed a tour of Israel and Lebanon at the invitation of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith say they were amazed by what they described as "relatively little civilian damage" caused by the fighting in Lebanon.

Harry Kinnard, a former commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Development Command, said that, compared to anything in his military experience, the damage to civilians was minimal. His statement was supported by other members of the group which included George Patton, son of the World War II hero; Richard Carr; Sidney Barry; and Lewis Perlstein, a member of the U.S. Army National Advisory Board.

The generals said that all their contacts with Israeli officers had been "candid, open and honest." They had been given full information on technical and operational matters and had passed all information received to U.S. military attaches.

Kinnard said the 1982 Israel army was far superior to what he had seen here in 1973, and the

Israelis had well learned the lessons of the Yom Kippur War. They had been especially impressed by the coordination of all arms of the services, he said.

Patton was impressed by the Israeli-designed Merkava tank but thought it not suited to the U.S. army. He said he was especially impressed by the small amount of "maneuver damage" caused by pushing heavy and bulky equipment, especially armor, through populated areas.

CEASE-FIRE HOLDING

TEL AVIV, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- The cease-fire in force since last Thursday is being observed in the Beirut area, apart from some small arms fire that was directed by terrorists at Israeli forces Friday night, with the Israelis returning the fire. Israeli forces suffered no casualties, the army spokesman said.

But on the central and eastern sector, where terrorists are located among Syrian forces, some mortar shells and rockets were fired at Israeli positions. The Israelis did not reply. An army spokesman said that two Israeli soldiers had been killed in the explosion of a booby-trapped car in the village Bahamboun east of Beirut, which wounded another three Israeli soldiers and five local residents.

U.S. SATISFIED WITH CEASE-FIRE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- The Reagan Administration continued to express its satisfaction that the cease-fire in Lebanon was being maintained following President Reagan's expression of "outrage" by telephone to Premier Menachem Begin last Thursday over Israel's bombardment of west Beirut.

At the same time, Reagan conferred over the weekend at Camp David with Secretary of State George Shultz and other Administration foreign policy specialists to discuss U.S. policy in the Middle East after the crisis in Lebanon is resolved.

"The cease-fire is holding well," State Department Deputy spokesman Alan Romberg said Friday. "We have a report from our people in Beirut that the other unaccustomed silence is very pleasant."

Romberg stressed that "all parties" must "strictly" observe the ceasefire "so that the negotiations can continue to make progress. Maintenance of the cease-fire is absolutely essential for progress."

Among those who conferred with Reagan at the presidential retreat were: White House Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver; Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese; Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Nicholas Veliotis; special Middle East negotiator Richard Fairbanks; and National Security Council Deputy assistant Robert McFarlane.

UN COUNCIL MEASURE CALLS FOR STRICT CEASE-FIRE, DEPLOYMENT OF UN OBSERVERS IN BEIRUT AREA

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- A resolution calling for strict observance of the cease-fire in Beirut and demanding that Israel permit the deployment of UN observers in the Beirut area was unanimously approved by the Security Council last Thursday night. The United States joined the other 14 members of the Council in supporting the resolution.

"Let the guns be permanently still," U.S. Ambassador Charles Lichtenstein told the Council in explaining his country's support for the measure. The vote took place several hours after President Reagan telephoned Israeli Premier Menachem Begin to express his "outrage" over Israel's heavy bombardment of west Beirut earlier in the day.

The resolution demanded "that Israel and all parties to the conflict observe strictly the terms of Security Council resolutions relevant to the immediate cessation of all military activities with Lebanon and particularly in and around Beirut." It also demanded that Israel "cooperate fully in the effort to secure effective deployment of the United Nations observers as requested by the government of Lebanon and in such a manner as to insure their safety."

Yehuda Blum, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, said that Israel would observe any cease-fire that the Palestinians observed.

Other parts of Thursday night's resolution called on Israel to allow the entry of supplies to west Beirut and requested a report by the Secretary General on the implementation of the resolution.

HUNDREDS OF EL AL WORKERS STAGE A TWO-HOUR DEMONSTRATION

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Hundreds of employees of El Al overcame police roadblocks and, using some 120 vehicles, staged a two-hour demonstration yesterday near the controversial Ramot Road against "religious coercion" as part of the workers continuing efforts to prevent the implementation of the government's decision to halt all Sabbath flights of El Al beginning September 1.

The demonstration, where religious zealots frequently attack cars travelling on the Sabbath, came just two days after El Al employees refused to allow Aguda Israel passengers to enter the Ben Gurion Airport terminal.

That incident came under strong criticism today by Aguda Knesset MK Menachem Porush, who warned in several interviews that if the workers persist in their campaign against religious Jews, they will boycott the national airline "and this will be the end of El Al." He compared the incident at Ben Gurion to the Holocaust.

While hundreds of El Al employees managed to get through the police road block and parked their vehicles in a grove next to Ramot Road, police succeeded in blocking hundreds of other El Al employees from joining the demonstration by positioning a roadblock on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Highway, some five miles before Jerusalem. Ramot lies north at the Jerusalem town center and is close to a number of ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods.

With religious children yelling "Shabbos" and occasionally throwing rocks at passing cars, the workers stayed in the grove for two hours before dispersing. Nevertheless, the El Al employees said they would hold further demonstrations against Aguda Israel which they hold responsible for the decision to ban Sabbath El Al flights.

Meanwhile, the Army Radio, quoting an Aguda spokesperson, reported today that the Council of Sages, the supreme authority of Aguda Israel, has declared a total ban on El Al. No further details were available. But Aguda Israel leaders had warned earlier that such action was possible in reaction to the Ben Gurion Airport incident. The Cabinet, at the same time, discussed the El Al worker's action at its weekly session and condemned the "violent and shameful demonstration."

BEGIN CALLS ON CABINET TO 'HOLD THE FIRE' AGAINST SHARON

By Hugh Orgel and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin called on Cabinet ministers to "hold the

fire" against Defense Minister Ariel Sharon in order to preserve the unity of the government at this delicate stage of the negotiations to get the PLO forces out of Lebanon.

Begin sought to cool down tempers over the weekend following the confrontation between the ministers and Sharon at a Cabinet meeting last Thursday, a meeting that was described as the most tense and bitter session ever held. Sharon, who found himself almost completely isolated at that session, was under fire for the heavy bombardment of west Beirut earlier in the day, a bombardment which almost all the ministers criticized as not in accordance with government decisions.

The heavy bombardment of west Beirut caused President Reagan to call Begin to express his "outrage" and to emphasize "that Israel's action halted" U.S. special envoy Ambassador Philip Habib's "negotiations for the peaceful resolution of the Beirut crisis when they were at the point of success." Reagan also stressed that Habib cannot complete his negotiations unless there is a complete cease-fire. The negotiations were halted Thursday. Israel declared a cease-fire after almost 10 hours of continuous raids in waves and the talks were resumed Friday.

Sharon Has Begin's Full Confidence

Despite the sharp exchanges between Begin and Sharon last week, political circles said today that the Premier has full confidence in his Defense Minister and that "there was no breach and no crisis of confidence between the two." Begin reportedly stressed that he does not intend to fire Sharon. The Premier told the Cabinet meeting today that "we should forget" last Thursday's meeting. "We have no time to waste on ourselves. We must take care of state affairs."

In a meeting with Begin after last week's Cabinet session, Sharon reportedly demanded clearer guidelines for implementing government decisions regarding the war in Lebanon. Under those guidelines, Begin would receive immediate reports on developments in the battle field, and Sharon would ask for Begin's approval for any intensive employment of land or air forces against terrorist targets in west Beirut. Begin, for his part, is expected to take a more active role in making this determination and will undertake all the negotiations with Habib.

Meanwhile, Sharon made it clear yesterday that he has no intention of resigning. He said in an interview with Israel Radio that he had always carried out the Cabinet decisions. He sought to play down his isolation within the Cabinet because of his recent decisions to heavily bomb west Beirut and to move the Israel Defense Force into the city.

Sharon conceded that Begin may not always have been informed in advance of "every flight of planes" but contended that "all exceptional activities" had always been cleared with the Cabinet before they were carried out.

Sharon declined to answer most questions about the attacks on him at last week's Cabinet session, saying he would not engage in "scandal-mongering and gossip or fiddle-tattle" and thus add to the "war of the Jews."

Sharon said his aims in ordering the bombings and Beirut area attacks had been to wipe out the PLO leadership and expel the PLO from

Beirut, to defend Israeli troops and to help speed up the diplomatic process on PLO evacuation from Beirut.

He added that the raids had been in accordance with government policy and instructions to respond to any PLO breach of a cease-fire by action by land, sea or air to afford Israeli soldiers with adequate protection.

Sharon said that the heavy attacks of the past two weeks had actually led to progress made in Habib's negotiations. He said that Israel had gone to war "to wipe out the terrorist bases in Lebanon, which had become a center for world terrorism" and to do so had had to attack terrorist headquarters inside Beirut.

He did not mention the original and more limited war aim, of merely clearing terrorists from artillery and rocket range of Israeli settlements.

Sharon stressed that civilians had never been knowingly attacked in Israeli raids, though he admitted that some civilians may have been hurt because they had been deliberately used as a screen by the terrorists. He charged that reports of civilian casualties had been deliberately exaggerated by the foreign news media.

Eitan Gives A Different Version

In a special interview, Chief of Staff Gen. Rafael Eitan appeared to give a different version of the reason for Israeli bombing raids from that presented by Sharon. Eitan said that even after Israel halted its air raid bombing, Israeli troops were being afforded "maximum protection." But Eitan declined to contradict the Defense Minister directly.

In reply to repeated questioning designed to elicit a direct contradiction, Eitan told his interviewer: "You are a parrot -- even a sick parrot -- if you continue to ask questions about the reason for the bombing raids. If you continue to be a sick parrot I will say goodbye and leave this room." Eitan agreed with Sharon in believing that the military pressure of recent days and weeks had helped Habib's negotiations.

Says There Is No 'Vacuum Bomb'

The Chief of Staff denied press reports that Israel had used a "vacuum bomb." He said: "There is no such thing as a vacuum bomb. A local paper which wrote last week that Israel had evolved a plan to secure its own soldiers from the effect of a vacuum bomb just shows ignorance. There is, to the best of my knowledge, no such thing as a vacuum bomb."

Eitan suggested that the "vacuum bomb story" might have been invented to explain away the surprising accuracy of Israeli bombings.

The Chief of Staff said the dispersal of the PLO among several countries after the Beirut withdrawal would reduce its capacity to harm Israel, though isolated terrorist actions abroad, carried out by small groups of four or five terrorists, might continue.

Eitan said he did not oppose discussions about the war inside the army or at civilian demonstrations in towns. "This is all part of democracy," he said.

SHAMIR; EGYPT HONORING PEACE PACT

JERUSALEM, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Egypt has honored its peace treaty with Israel despite recent strains over the war in Lebanon, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir told Israel Radio. Nevertheless, after a meeting several days ago with Egypt's Ambassador to Israel, Saad Mortada, Shamir conceded that there were "certain problems" in the relations between the two countries.

The Foreign Minister indicated that Israel was displeased with anti-Israel comments in the Egyptian news media and by Egyptian leaders, but emphasized that Egypt remained loyal to the peace treaty. "We don't see any signs of a deterioration of the peace relations" between the two countries, Shamir said.

PERES DEFENDS ISRAEL'S INCURSION INTO LEBANON

NEW YORK, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- Shimon Peres, head of Israel's Labor Party and leader of the opposition in the Knesset, defended Israel's incursion into Lebanon in an address last Friday to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Peres' address, which came on the heels of President Reagan's call on Premier Menachem Begin to end the heavy bombing of west Beirut, avoided mention of either the bombing or the President's message. While refraining from comment -- he told a TV reporter that "I don't criticize my government when I am outside the country" -- Peres justified the national political debate in Israel in the midst of the Lebanon fighting.

"God forbid that we should all have the same view," he told some 300 leaders of the Presidents Conference. "That would be the end of our strength as a democracy, and even as a military power."

Peres said America and Israel need not always agree with one another. "Washington and Jerusalem are in the same boat, heading for the same direction," the Labor Party leader said, adding: "I see no 'confrontation' between our two countries."

Says Israel Had No Choice

In defending Israel's "Peace for Galilee" operation, Peres said "Israel had no choice but to end the PLO threat to its security." As a result, he added, "the American position in the Middle East has also been greatly enhanced. A whole generation of Soviet weapons has been destroyed and King Hussein (of Jordan) is not likely to turn to Moscow for Soviet missiles and planes."

On the future of the West Bank and Gaza, however, the Labor Party leader reiterated the view that Israel should avoid incorporating into the country 1.3 million Palestinians living in those areas. "The Jewish people have never been nor sought to be a dominating nation. Our aim was always not to be dominated by others. If we add more than 1 million Arab citizens to the 600,000 who already live as citizens among us, Israel will turn into a bi-national state whose two parts will not be able to live in peace."

Sees Mitterrand As Friend Of Israel

During a question-and-answer period, Peres was asked if he thought the Third World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry, scheduled for late October in Paris, should take place in view of the French government's attitude toward the war in Lebanon and the recent outbreak of anti-Jewish terror there.

In reply, Peres said he regarded French President Francois Mitterrand as "a friend of Israel, the most knowledgeable French leader ever, both in heart and mind." He recalled that the French President had paid a "friendly visit" to Jerusalem "to express his deep feelings for Israel and the Jewish people." Peres added:

"Let us not rush to nominate enemies. Many Jews feel as President Mitterrand does. He and I disagree on giving a role to the PLO in any future negotiations over the West Bank and Gaza, but in contrast to the statements of our European leaders, in the context of which his remarks must be taken, President Mitterrand has clearly stated the PLO is not the sole representative of the Palestinian Arabs.

"I see no reason to cancel the Paris conference on Soviet Jewry. Let us not hide our views. Let us hope the French will succeed in halting the anti-Semitic attacks. And let us distinguish between disagreements and divorce."

SMOLAR BOOK PUBLISHED

BALTIMORE, Aug. 15 (JTA) -- The publication of a book, "In the Service of My People," by Boris Smolar, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and former roving correspondent in European countries for Pulitzer's New York World, was announced by the Baltimore Hebrew College. The book is published in hard cover for the general reader and libraries, and in soft cover for students of contemporary history, especially in schools of higher Jewish learning.

Smolar's work for the JTA and The New York World took him to a number of countries where he met with Presidents and Premiers, including the first President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Kalinin, and the first President of Israel, Dr. Chaim Weizman. He was the only American correspondent observing and reporting on developments in Jewish life in the Soviet Union in the early years of Stalin's reign.

During the early years of the Nazi regime in Germany, Smolar was sent from New York to Berlin to report on the plight of the Jews in Germany. He was the only link between the leaders of the German Jews and the outside world. He supplied foreign correspondents with anti-Nazi information, as a result of which the Gestapo tried to arrest him several times. In 1936, Germany declared Smolar "a danger to the Third Reich" and deported him.

He was in Palestine during the Arab riots in 1929 and in 1936, and later witnessed the session of the United Nations at which the historic resolution leading to the establishment of the State of Israel was voted.

The Facts Can Now Be Told

Writing in the introduction to the book, Smolar states: "This is not an autobiography. It is a selection of episodes in my career as an American journalist. Some of the chapters contain facts which -- for various reasons -- could not be made public at the time they occurred. They can now be told."

Smolar continues to be an active journalist today with a regular weekly column, *Between You and Me*, which is syndicated by the JTA and appears in publications throughout the world in various languages. He also writes a weekly editorial essay for the Sunday edition of the *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York City.

In 1972, the Council of Jewish Federations established an annual award in his honor, The Smolar Award for Excellence in American Jewish Journalism. In 1980, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee established the JDC-Smolar Student Journalism Award. In 1968 he revisited the Soviet Union and wrote a book, "Soviet Jewry Today and Tomorrow." It was published by Macmillan in 1971.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- The cost of living index rose by 9.2 percent in July, bringing the index increase during the first seven months of the year to 63.7 percent. At the present rate, the index is running at an inflationary rate of between 130 and 133 percent a year, compared to 100 percent last year. Economists said it was the highest July increase since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.