

JTA daily news bulletin

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Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency / 165 West 46th Street / New York, New York 10036-2574

Vol. LX - 65th Year

Thursday, December 23, 1982

No. 242

SHARON WARNS THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT TOLERATE TERRORIST ACTS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Ariel Sharon claimed today that a road mine which killed two Israeli army officers and wounded three others in eastern Lebanon yesterday was "clearly planted by Palestinian terrorists." He said Israel would not tolerate such attacks and would take action to prevent their recurrence. He did not say what kind of action he had in mind.

In another incident today, an explosive charge detonated near an Israeli army vehicle near Kfar Sul in the vicinity of Beirut airport. An army spokesman said there were no casualties or damage but a search of the area uncovered two more explosive devices.

The officers killed yesterday were identified as reserve lieutenant colonels riding in a jeep on an inspection trip to a point overlooking Syrian army lines. Their names were not immediately released. Their jeep struck a mine on a dirt road after skidding in mud. Army sources said the Syrians in that sector have been trying to restrain Palestinians who are under their protection. The sources said the Syrians have been seen to use force to maintain discipline.

No Compromise On Taba

Sharon discussed the incident with reporters during a tour of the Israel-Egyptian border where he raised the issue of the disputed Taba region. Taba comprises several acres of beach where Israel recently opened a resort hotel, the Sonesta, despite Egypt's claim that it is part of Sinai. The dispute was supposed to be resolved through a negotiating process established by the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty.

But talks were suspended after Israel invaded Lebanon last June and the Egyptians refuse to resume them until all Israeli forces are out of Lebanon. Sharon insisted today that Taba belongs to Israel and "there will be no compromise." He told reporters, "We would not have developed the beach area and built this hotel if we did not think this was ours." He said Taba was only one of 15 points along the Israel-Egyptian border still under dispute which could be resolved only by negotiations.

BACKGROUND REPORT CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE 'SLIPPAGE' IN ISRAELI-LEBANESE NEGOTIATIONS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- There is some concern here that the working paper concluded last week between Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and top Lebanese officials for talks on Israeli withdrawal and security might fail to be approved by other elements in the Beirut government.

The concern was voiced today against the backdrop of statements from Beirut referring to the forthcoming talks without reference to the normalization aspect of the working paper which the government of Israel stressed as a significant breakthrough.

Israeli sources have indicated that President Amr Gemayel himself was privy -- though not apparently directly a participant -- in the Sharon talks and in

effect approved the document. But the fears here are that Moslem elements in the Beirut government -- the name of Premier Shafiq Wazzan is cited in this connection -- do not approve of the working paper and some "slippage" could set in.

By midweek both countries were saying that formal negotiations would begin shortly. Reports here this afternoon predicted the talks would start in the middle of next week, probably at the town of Khalde near Beirut. Israel wants the talks to alternate between Khalde and Kiryat Shmoga.

Labor, Likud Mk's Praise Document

Despite the growing concern over "slippage," Sharon does seem to have persuaded the entire political community here that the working paper, which he disclosed last Thursday, is a meaningful advance holding out the promise of peaceful relations (though not sure peace) between Israel and Lebanon.

At the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee yesterday Labor Alignment leaders joined with Likud legislators in praising the document, though some of the Laborites injected a note of caution, observing that the document looked good on paper but its real test would be its translation, during negotiations, from principles into detailed arrangements and provisions.

Three Sections Of The Working Paper

Sharon said the document provided for a formal "end of belligerency" between Israel and Lebanon. It comprised three main sections, he continued: on withdrawal, on normalization and on security arrangements. Other sources told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that there is a specific provision that all these three key elements will be negotiated as one package -- a provision which Israel regards as especially important from the political standpoint.

On withdrawal, the document deals with prospective Israel Defense Force withdrawal from Lebanon, but the unstated understanding, of course, is that this will come simultaneously with Syrian and PLO withdrawal from the areas of Lebanon under their control.

Sharon told the Knesset committee yesterday that he believed Syria was now ready for at least a first-stage withdrawal, leading to a separation of forces between the Syrians and the IDF. But Israel would not agree to execute a first-stage until all subsequent stages had been agreed upon and scheduled, he said.

Israeli officials believe that the readiness of high Lebanese figures to conclude the working paper with Sharon (their precise identities have not been revealed) itself attests to the feeling by these Lebanese that the Syrians are indeed ready to accept the principle of simultaneous withdrawal -- despite Damascus' formal position demanding total IDF evacuation before the Syrian army begins to move back.

On normalization, according to Israeli sources, the document provides for the principle of borders open for the passage of persons and goods. But these sources anticipate long and tough negotiations on how much normalization will be applied, and how fast it will be applied.

The working paper also provides for a permanent channel of communication between the two governments, in the form of an Israeli diplomatic office that will remain in Beirut "until full peace" when full-fledged embassies will be established. Sharon indicated to the Knesset committee that no similar official Lebanese representation in Israel is contemplated at this stage.

AN ALMOST DEFUNCT FACTION IN THE NRP IS ATTEMPTING A REVIVAL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- The news that the almost defunct "Likud Utemura" (Unity and Change) faction within the National Religious Party is attempting a revival has aroused deep interest within the political community.

Premier Menachem Begin himself, as well as other top ministers, were reported yesterday to have contacted NRP leaders asking whether the Likud Utemura return to the scene could have far-reaching repercussions for the coalition.

The man behind the would-be revival is Likud Utemura's long-time leader, former Religions Minister Yitzhak Raphael. Interviewed this week, Raphael said cryptically -- and significantly -- that if his faction would succeed in restoring the NRP to its former fortunes it would be "tied to" neither of the two main blocs, Likud or Labor. In the national elections last year, the NRP lost six of its 12 seats in the Knesset.

Not Tainted By Extremism

Of himself, Raphael said he had always been "middle of the road" within the tradition of Mizrahi. His chief lieutenant in Likud Utemura, former MK David Glass of Jerusalem is a noted dove within the religious camp. Raphael, considered a powerful and very talented individual, is a product and advocate of the traditional NRP Mizrahi moderation, and is not tainted by the extremism of the Gush Emunim.

He is not personally committed to the Likud-NRP alliance, having been on the sidelines when it was established five years ago and renewed last year. There are fears, therefore, that if Raphael recaptures a pivotal position in the NRP, the party could move away from Likud and return eventually to the historic alliance with Labor.

Raphael stressed that he himself sought no formal role of leadership in the revived faction. But there was no doubt that it is he, behind the scenes, who is the driving force behind the revival.

Ouster Still Rankles Raphael

In his media interviews, Raphael is forthright in his direct criticism of the NRP leaders, Yosef Burg (of the Lamifne faction) and Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben-Meir (of the "Young Guard" faction) for being responsible for the party's massive electoral defeat.

Raphael says he harbors no grudges, but plainly his unceremonious ouster from the front ranks of the party in 1977, as a result of a "plot" in which Glass and another top lieutenant, Aharon Abu-Hatzeira, cooperated with the Young Guard faction, still rankles Raphael. He seems to have forgiven Glass -- who is now closely involved with him in the revival of the faction. But he still sees himself apparently as at odds with the other main factions.

Before Raphael's ouster from the party's front ranks, in what was known as the battle of the "long knives," the Likud Utemura faction held 30 percent of the power and patronage in the NRP, with 30 percent also held by Burg's faction and 20-add percent by the Young Guard. The fear is that the past is prologue. If the Likud Utemura revival succeeds, it will make its mark when the NRP holds its internal election, probably next April.

Tami's Position Is Declining

Some political observers here link the revival of Likud Utemura -- a nationwide meeting of activists was held in Tel Aviv this week -- to reports of a decline in the standing of Tami, the ethnic breakaway party formed by Abu-Hatzeira in 1981.

Some Tami adherents have openly returned to the NRP fold, and others are signalling that they would consider doing so if Abu-Hatzeira's appeal to the Supreme Court against his conviction in an embezzlement case is not upheld. The case is presently pending.

While Tami fared well in last week's tough politicking at the World Zionist Congress, the public opinion polls in Israel show it gradually fading as a political force. A large part of its activist membership, which broke away from NRP with Abu-Hatzeira, belonged to the Likud Utemura faction, and, if that faction is now revived, some of them would be tempted to return to their former political home.

ZIM LINES ENLARGING ITS FLEET

TEL AVIV, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- The Zim Lines, Israel's national shipping company, is enlarging its fleet of specialized cargo carriers despite the worldwide shipping slump. But it is doing so with caution by buying rather than building new vessels although the price of new tonnage is down.

The company recently purchased two conventional cargo ships built in Gdansk, Poland in 1973, for Israel's citrus export trade. The 12,000 deadweight ton vessels have been modified at the Haifa Shipyards to carry uncrated cars, refrigerated cargo and 1,000 tons of liquid cargo on their return trips from Europe. Outward, each has a capacity of 180,000 crates of citrus. They were re-named Tapuz and Hadar.

Zim has also purchased a 60,000 deadweight ton dry bulk carrier, the first of a series of ships intended to replace the company's older 30,000 ton bulk carriers.

PARIS (JTA) -- The French post office has issued a stamp carrying a picture of former Premier Leon Blum. The 1.80 Franc stamp will be used for all regular mail within France and the 10-nation European Economic Community. President Francois Mitterrand and Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy attended a special ceremony at the main post office museum to mark the issuance of the new stamp. Blum, who was Jewish, served as a Prime Minister twice, once when he led the Socialist coalition in 1936 and again in the immediate post-war years.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Rishon LeZion, Israel's first (and so far only) Sabra alligator, born three months ago to new immigrant parents from Florida, has returned home to his incubator at the El Hamma alligator farm on the Golan Heights. The 10-inch long alligator, stolen from the farm last Saturday, was deposited by whoever removed it after slashing its plastic heated home, at the Acre railroad station.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWRY By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- A Westchester Jewish businessman and activist has returned from a brief visit to the Soviet Union, during which he managed to meet personally with some 20 Jewish refuseniks, with the conviction that their situation was hopeless, a conviction he said would spur him to even greater efforts to try to help get them out of the USSR.

Leonard Kesten of Bedford, N.Y., described his visit and his concern for the future of the Jewish refuseniks in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, expressing the fear that they could be in physical danger. He said he went to the Soviet Union as a member of a group of seven tourists, which included his wife, another couple, a single woman and two young American Jews.

Kesten, 49, who was on a commercially-organized tour, was not simply a visitor in search of new tourist experiences. He is well-informed and has a solid background on the status and problems of Soviet Jewry through his work in HIAS of which he is a board member; the United Jewish Appeal in which he is very active; and through other American Jewish organizations.

But he stressed to the JTA that he had not made his visit to the Soviet Union as a representative of any American Jewish organization, though he and other members of his group brought with them names and addresses of refuseniks because they wanted to talk to some.

Kesten said he was convinced that he and the other American Jewish visitors were under constant surveillance by the KGB. He said that while the refuseniks he and the other American Jewish visitors met and talked to showed no signs of fear about such meetings, both the refuseniks and Soviet Jews he saw, but did not meet directly, occasionally showed signs of paranoia which he came to feel was amply justified.

A Typical Experience

He said he and other Jews in his group met with about 20 refuseniks in Leningrad and about 30 in Moscow. He said it was a typical experience to meet Russian Jews, both young and old, who had immediately lost their jobs when they applied for emigration to Israel. In a society in which government is the sole employer, a substitute source of income is a severe problem, he observed.

Kesten said that, after two days in Leningrad, the Americans proceeded to Moscow where they remained until they left the Soviet Union on October 10.

Kesten said the refuseniks repeatedly asked the American visitors what help American Jewry could provide them to enable them to live as Jews in the USSR. He said that the frequency of that appeal left him with the impression that the refuseniks had reluctantly accepted the conclusion they would probably never be allowed to emigrate.

Kesten related that impression to the drastic drop of a peak of 50,000 emigrating Jews in 1979 to around 250 in September. Kesten's group was the first to visit the Soviet Union to learn about the impact of that drastic drop in emigration rates and emigration hopes of Russian Jews who had planned to leave.

On a visit to the apartment of one of the refuseniks, Kesten related, three other young refuseniks came to the apartment to meet the Jewish visitors from America. Each time one of the visiting refuseniks rang the doorbell for admittance, such was the paranoia of the host couple that "their heads just spun around," Kesten said.

He said "it was like viewing a movie film about the 1930s; one would think of what had happened in Germany, every time there was a knock on the door or the doorbell rang" in that apartment.

Kesten, who is also a member of the Board of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, said the visitors encountered many moving experiences. One involved a visit to the Moscow home of a refusenik denied emigration 10 years previously.

The refusenik had a map of Israel on a wall of his apartment, which he indicated to his visitors was the closest he ever expected to get to Israel. Kesten said that meeting took place on a Saturday and that he and his wife expected to be enroute Monday to Israel.

He said it was "a very tough feeling" to know their host would probably never get there. But, when the Kestens told him about their pending visit to Israel, it appeared "comforting for him to know that here were two Jews in his apartment who in two days were going to be in Israel."

A 'Catch-22' Situation

Kesten said he agreed with the viewpoint of concerned Jews that it was as much a duty of world Jewry to try to make it possible for Russian Jews who could not or did not want to leave the Soviet Union to be permitted to live freely as Jews, as it was to try to get those out who wanted to leave.

Asked whether his experiences had left him with a feeling that Soviet Jews could neither leave as Jews nor live as Jews, Kesten responded "that's correct." He said it was a "catch-22 situation." He said the refuseniks asked the American Jewish visitors for help "in the sense that if a husband or breadwinner is incarcerated, they need help to get an attorney, or help to support the family while the father is incarcerated." He added, sadly, "they don't know how we can actually help them."

Asked if he and his fellow-visitors found any evidence to support any possibility that the Jews forbidden emigration can live freely as Jews in the USSR, Kesten replied "the young Jews we talked to don't think so."

'Heroes Of The Jewish People'

Kesten said that while he and his fellow visitors had talked only to refuseniks, he had the impression that the majority of Russian Jews followed a policy of "keeping a low profile; they don't make waves." Nevertheless, he added, despite the harassment visited on the refuseniks, there is a minority who are "in the forefront of continuing with Jewish education, with teaching their children Jewishness," despite formidable difficulties.

He expressed astonishment that, with all the abuse that their elders -- the Russian Jews in their late 60's or early 70's -- have known, there are still Jews now, in their 20's and 30's, who are starting to subject themselves to the role of behaving as Jews, "knowing that they are going to be harassed and knowing that they are going to be outcasts in their own society" and yet are willing to "pop up and are willing to associate with and be involved with a Jewish movement."

Kesten called such young Russian Jews "heroes of the Jewish people who, for whatever reasons, are standing up to be counted with the Jews of the world."

He said he had returned home more than ever determined to extend and strengthen Jewish efforts here for Soviet Jews. He said he learned from his work for Jewish causes that there are Jews active in the UJA and the Federations who are highly philanthropic but that they do not "truly understand the complexities of the organization and what the end product is and the people the organization does touch."

He said such American Jews have heard about Soviet Jews, they have heard about refuseniks, but "it's been words and newspaper accounts" and "it has not really touched them." He said he was convinced that he had touched them because, he said, when he spoke to 300 Jews recently at a UJA inaugural campaign in Westchester, he asked his listeners to prepare postcards addressed to Secretary of State George Shultz, on behalf of Anatoly Shcharansky, who is being force-fed during a hunger strike he started last Yom Kippur to protest his incarceration in Chistopol prison near Moscow.

Kesten said 205 members of his audience filled out the cards, which he collected on the spot, stamped and mailed to Shultz.

BLUM: ISRAEL'S BASIC POSITION AT UN DID NOT CHANGE DURING THE CURRENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- Israel's basic interests and position at the United Nations did not change during the 37th session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Yehuda Blum of Israel told reporters here at a briefing yesterday.

Blum said, however, that it is expected that next year the Arabs will attempt again to suspend Israel from the Assembly. He added that the composition of the Security Council will be "worse" next year because Pakistan will replace Japan, Nicaragua will replace Panama and Malta will replace Ireland as part of the rotation of seats.

The envoy noted that the Assembly, which concluded yesterday after being in session for three months, opened a few days after the massacre of Palestinian civilians in Beirut and marked the first time Israel had participated in an international forum since the "Peace for Galilee" operation was launched June 6.

"The timing was not in Israel's favor," Blum said, referring to the proximity of the events in Lebanon and the opening of the Assembly session. "But at the end there was not a great deal of change as far as Israel is concerned. We knew that there would be a series of anti-Israel resolutions (in the Assembly), as in previous years, but all in all Israel, at the conclusion of the Assembly, is more at ease than when the Assembly opened."

A 'Failure' For The Arabs

Blum claimed that the Assembly session could be viewed as a "failure" for the Arabs. He noted that when the session began it seemed that the Arabs were going to try to use their diplomatic muscles to make up for the military defeat in Lebanon and the lack of concerted Arab reaction to the Israeli operation. But the Arab delegations did not succeed, Blum said.

"The Arabs at the UN have realized that the Palestine Liberation Organization was crushed militarily and politically in Lebanon," the Israeli envoy said. As a result, he observed, the Arabs, in order to sweeten the bitter pill of defeat

the PLO had to swallow, supported even more extreme resolutions in the Assembly dealing with Palestinian rights than they did in the past.

But, behind the scenes, it was clear that the PLO had lost ground with the Arab delegations, Blum said. "This became particularly clear in relations between Jordan and the PLO," he said. He noted that the division of interests became evident "with the struggle and sharp exchanges" between the two sides.

Disappointed With Europeans

Blum expressed disappointment about the attitude of the European countries toward the Mideast conflict. He said that while the European countries voted against extreme pro-Palestinian resolutions last year, they preferred to abstain this year. This was clearly demonstrated Monday when the European countries abstained on a resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state under the leadership of the PLO, Blum said. He also expressed "disappointment" that a number of Latin American countries supported this year the anti-Israeli resolution on the Mideast.

Blum said that Israel was successful in thwarting the Arab move to suspend Israel from the Assembly. He said that this was possible because the United States took a very firm position against the Arab plan.

As for the role of Egypt in this year's Assembly, Blum said that the Egyptians used the occasion as part of their campaign to return to the Arab fold. As a result, Blum said, the Egyptian rhetoric at the UN was very unpleasant to Israeli ears. "It began in April, when Israel completed its withdrawal from the Sinai. The Egyptians suddenly started sharpening their rhetoric" against Israel, Blum said, noting that the Egyptian speeches at the UN during the Lebanon war were among the sharpest attacking Israel.

JERUSALEM FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 22 (JTA) -- Ten young scholars from four countries have begun work in their chosen fields at Israeli universities or yeshivas under the new Jerusalem Fellowship program in Jewish education inaugurated this year.

The scheme originated with Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization Executives. It is financed by the Bank Leumi which will provide \$1 million a year for three years to bring 30 Jewish scholars from diaspora countries for one year of study in Israel. It will be followed by two years of practical work and further studies in Israel, after which the students will return to their native countries to head Jewish educational institutions.

Six of the first winners of Jerusalem Fellowships are Americans. Two are British and one each are from France and Argentina. Two are women. All hold at least bachelor degrees and several have Ph.Ds. They range in age from 26-35.

Hebrew University professor of philosophy Nathan Rotenstreich, who heads the Fellowship program's academic committee, and his Hebrew University colleague, professor of education Shlomo Fox, who is academic director, told reporters yesterday that they are convinced the Jerusalem Fellowships would soon be as prestigious as the Nieman Fellowships at Harvard University for outstanding journalists.

The scholars, now studying here under the guidance of personal tutors are: Chanan Alexander, Peretz Rodman, Ellen Rosansky, Marc Rosenstein, Moshe Sokolow and Susan Wall, all from the U.S.; Alastair Falk and Michael Gillis from Britain; Jean-Jacques Wahl of France; and Gustave Perednik of Argentina.