

ISRAELI JETS BLAST PLO TARGETS IN LEBANON FOR SECOND TIME THIS WEEK

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Israel Air Force jets blasted targets in Lebanon today for the second time since Sunday as armored patrols of the Israel Defense Force continued their probes well north of the Awali River line, into territory controlled by Druze and Shiite Moslem militias which have been battling the Lebanese army.

According to a military spokesman, today's air raids, like those of Sunday, were directed against installations allegedly used by units of the Palestine Liberation Organization for attacks on IDF patrols in south Lebanon. They were also a warning to the PLO not to redeploy itself in areas vacated by the IDF and a warning to the Druze not to allow the PLO into those regions, military sources said.

The Israeli planes hit four buildings in two target areas — one south of Behamdoun and the other near the Beirut-Damascus highway. All aircraft returned safely to their bases. Only light anti-aircraft fire was encountered, the military spokesman said.

On Sunday, the planes struck targets in the Hammama and Behamdoun areas, north and south of the Beirut-Damascus highway, identified as training bases for PLO units. Another target was a multi-story building east of Damour, believed to have been taken over by the PLO after Moslem forces ousted the Christian Phalangists from Damour.

Purpose Of The Attacks

The IDF has been sending tanks and armored personnel carriers along the coastal road as far north as Damour for the past few days. The force was described as "small strength."

But Defense Minister Moshe Arens told Likud party members that today's armored patrol was in greater strength than usual. He said the purpose was to ensure that no terrorists have returned to the area. According to Arens, the fact that the patrols have not come under fire proved that the sweeps north of the Awali River are correct policy.

But Labor MK Yossi Sarid charged today that such activities will embroil Israel in new political and military adventures in Lebanon. He sent a telegram to acting Premier David Levy protesting the IDF movements north of its Awali River line. The government has learned nothing from its past mistakes and the "dream which has already been shattered still holds and leads to new adventures," he said referring to the crumbling of Israel's accord with President Amin Gemayel's government.

The IDF, meanwhile, denied a series of reports from Beirut of IDF troop activity in the immediate vicinity of the Lebanese capital. The reports mentioned tank landings just south of Beirut, ground activity and bombardment by Israeli naval vessels off shore while spotter helicopters flew overhead.

The IDF suffered some casualties in south Lebanon, none serious. A soldier was slightly wounded by small arms fire yesterday as his convoy approached Sidon from the south. Three Israeli soldiers were slightly wounded Sunday when a grenade was thrown at their patrol in the center of Sidon. They were treated on the spot and returned to their duties.

Local sources said a resident of Sidon was wounded when the Israeli patrol opened fire, hitting a bank building and a parked car. The area was sealed off and 10 workers were detained, all of them Egyptian citizens.

A grenade was thrown at two Israeli army trucks in south Lebanon yesterday without causing casualties or damage. The newspaper Maariv reported Sunday that Shiite Moslem leaders have instructed their men to attack IDF patrols north of the Awali River if they approached the "Khalde triangle" just south of Beirut. Lebanese Druze leaders reported yesterday that the Khalde area and Damour have been cleared of Phalangists and urged Druze civilians who had fled to return home.

Israeli sources said the Druze have reached an unwritten agreement with Israel not to allow PLO fighters to enter the Druze strongholds in the Shouf mountains.

FOCUS ON ISSUES IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW CONCORDAT

By Lisa Palmieri-Billig

ROME, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The new Concordat just agreed to by the Italian State and the Roman Catholic Church will have wide implications for the Italian Jewish community, including control of its ancient cultural and historical heritage in Rome.

The Concordat, signed Saturday by Premier Bettino Craxi, leader of the Socialist Party, and Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the Vatican Secretary of State, establishes a clear demarcation between the temporal and religious powers of the Church and advances religious pluralism in Italy. It is by and large a revision and up-dating of the 1929 Concordat signed between the Church and Mussolini regime which formalized Roman Catholicism as the State religion.

Under the new Concordat, this is no longer the case. Catholic religious instruction is no longer compulsory in Italian public schools.

The revised relationship between Church and State will effect the so-called "mini-concordats" between the State and non-Catholic faiths which are also up for revision. Italian Protestants—mostly Waldensian and Methodist — will sign revised agreements with the government next week. The Union of Italian Jewish Communities is lagging behind.

No date has been set for a definitive revision, mainly because an existing draft still contains several points of controversy within the Jewish community itself. But the Concordat between the Catholic Church and the State contains several articles which will doubtlessly serve as guidelines for Jewish requests for revisions.

Equal Rights For All Religions

Roman Catholicism is no longer "the sole religion of the Italian State" nor are other religions merely "permitted." In principle, all religions now have equal rights. Primary and secondary public school classes in "the Catholic religion" are no longer "compulsory," with students of other faiths or ideologies being allowed "exemption" from religious instruction.

The teaching of "the Catholic religion" is still guaranteed by the government, but as an elective subject. By the same token, a revised agreement with the Jewish community could provide governmental guarantees for the teaching of "the Jewish religion" in

public schools, at the request of students and parents. Students of theology remain deferred from military service, as are university students generally. The clergy may perform civil service in place of military service or be exempt; or clergy may serve as chaplains with the armed forces. It follows that the same rights and privileges (some already granted) will be valid for Jewish schools, rabbinical seminarians and the Jewish "clergy" when the final revision is drafted.

Vatican Relinquishes Claims To Jewish Catacombs

Of special interest to the Jewish community is the Concordat's provision that the cultural and historical patrimony of the Church will be protected and guarded by special joint State-Church commissions. The Jewish historical and archaeological patrimony in Italy is large and rich. It is in a sad state of decay at present for lack of funds. But the moment may be at hand for Italian Jewry to request State help, based on the Catholic precedent.

The catacombs are a special aspect of this issue. The new Concordat states that the Vatican accepts full responsibility for the administration of the Christian catacombs, including permission to excavate, while at the same time it gives up all claims to "other" catacombs, meaning the Jewish catacombs.

The Jewish community wants jurisdiction over them. The Villa Torlonia and Villa Randonini are two of the most important in Rome. Only the latter is presently open to visitors. Since no arrangements have been made for its custody, the entrance to the Villa Torlonia, an ancient staircase, has been buried for several years "to protect the catacombs from vandalism."

Importance Of The Jewish Catacombs

Henryk Geller, a Jewish scholar and historian who is an expert on the catacombs, was contacted by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. He has been involved with the catacomb issue for years and is a founder of the World Jewish Congress' Heritage Committee, set up to solve this and similar problems.

He told the JTA, "The study of the Jewish catacombs evidently touches on problems of ancient Jewish-Christian relations and could shed new light on the self-understanding and historical knowledge of both religions." Precious and numerous items from archaeological excavations brought to light in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were once on view in the Lateran Museum of the Vatican, which no longer exists.

Only a few pieces are presently on display in the Capitoline and Vatican museums. Why are the others not on exhibition? Geller asks. The Jewish catacombs and the treasures still buried in them will return to Jewish jurisdiction if Italian Jewry so decides. But financial means must be found for their upkeep and this would require a definitive agreement with the Italian State.

Another question implicitly raised by the new Concordat relates to the financial basis for the functioning of Jewish communities throughout Italy. The 1929 agreement between Italian Jewry and Mussolini provided for self-taxation backed in times of extreme duress, by the Italian State. The State may also be called upon for legal enforcement. An Italian Jewish immigrant from Libya recently challenged this law and a decision by the Supreme Court is pending.

SHAMIR MAKING PROGRESS CONVINCING EEC LEADERS OF ISRAEL'S NEED FOR FAVORABLE TRADE TREATMENT IN EUROPE

By Edwin Eytan

BRUSSELS, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Premier Yitzhak Shamir is making some progress convincing leaders of the European Economic Community (EEC) of Israel's need for favorable treatment in its trade with Western Europe. He made an impassioned plea last night for the Europeans to take into consideration Israel's dire economic plight, noting its \$1.7 billion trade deficit with the EEC.

Today, the EEC agreed to allow Israel to delay by two years the removal of its remaining tariff barriers on industrial goods imported from the 10 EEC member states. Avi Pazner, spokesman for the Israeli delegation, said this concession and a decision to grant Israel special privileges to help protect its struggling industries were "a great success for Israel's manufacturers."

Shamir is on a three-day visit here devoted mainly to economic and trade matters. He spoke last night at the EEC-Israel mixed commission, a body that was "frozen" when Israel invaded Lebanon in June, 1982. The fact that the commission has resumed deliberations after a two-year hiatus was hailed by Israeli diplomats as a great success.

A Major Goal of Shamir's Trip

A major goal of Shamir's trip is protection for Israel's agricultural exports after Spain and Portugal become full-fledged members of the EEC. Shamir has urged the EEC to take into account that over 70 percent of Israel's agricultural exports go to Western Europe. He said Spanish agricultural products would squeeze Israel out of this market unless its products were granted special import conditions.

He noted further that unless the situation changes, Spain would be the only EEC member state that has no diplomatic relations with Israel and does not even formally recognize it. This could produce a bizarre situation when and if the Spanish delegate holds the rotating chairmanship of the EEC's Council of Ministers, Shamir said.

Spain's Foreign Minister, Fernando Moran, who is also in Brussels, met with reporters today while Shamir was in the same building conferring with EEC officials. Moran said Spain "wants diplomatic relations with all parties in the Middle East," implying that this includes the Palestinians. He denied that he had asked to meet Shamir and Israeli sources said Shamir had not requested a meeting with the Spanish diplomat.

BERMAN: EGYPT WANTS TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL BUT ALSO WANTS TO RETURN TO THE ARAB WORLD

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Egypt, in the long run, is interested in improving its relations with Israel but its short term priority is to return to the Arab fold, according to Julius Berman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Berman held a press conference here today to report on his talk with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Cairo yesterday. He said that despite the "cold peace" between Egypt and Israel there are ongoing contacts between the two countries.

He noted as an example that Mubarak will send a message this week to Premier Yitzhak Shamir on Egyptian-Israeli relations. Egypt has also agreed to allow the resumption of the search for the bodies of fallen Israeli soldiers in Sinai, Berman said, but Mubarak sees that as "humanitarian" and not a political gesture.

Mubarak asked Berman to reassure the Israelis of his good intentions toward Israel. But Berman pointed today to "Egypt's escalating conditions" for the return of its Ambassador to Tel Aviv. Those conditions are Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, movement in the autonomy talks and a resolution of Egyptian-Israeli border dispute in the Taba region. Egypt recalled its Ambassador when Israel invaded Lebanon in June, 1982.

Berman said there was no doubt that Egypt does not want war with Israel. He said Mubarak denied reports that he had told King Hassan of Morocco last year that he considered the Camp David accords "dead." On the other hand, the Egyptian President did not appear overly perturbed by the fact that Hassan circulated that story, Berman reported.

Says U.S.-Israel Relations At Their Highest

The American Jewish leader visited Cairo after leading a 70-member delegation representing the constituent organizations of the Presidents Conference in a series of meetings with Israeli leaders here last week. He was accompanied by Yehuda Hellman, executive vice chairman of the Presidents Conference.

Before leaving for the Egyptian capital Sunday, Berman told reporters here that relations between the U.S. and Israel are "probably at the highest they have been for quite a few years" and the American decision to pull the marines out of Beirut will not affect them.

He said the U.S.-Israel relationship is now predicated on the agreements for military and economic cooperation worked out during Shamir's visit to Washington last November. "What was critical about the November agreements was the new position of this (Reagan) Administration, not only to have a close and firm alliance with Israel ... but to do it in open daylight," Berman said.

U.S. SAYS IT WILL NOT RECOGNIZE OR TALK TO THE PLO UNTIL IT ACCEPTS ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The Reagan Administration maintained today that it has been consistent in its policy "both publicly and privately" not to recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization until it accepts United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and Israel's right to exist.

"There is no change in that," State Department deputy spokesman Alan Romberg stressed. "We said if they do these things, then we'll talk to them. There is no change in that."

But Romberg would not discuss, specifically, published reports that the Administration, over a nine-month period ending in June, 1982, conducted secret discussions through an intermediary with PLO chief Yasir Arafat.

According to the published reports, the intermediary was John Mroz, a specialist on the Middle East and the Soviet Union, who reportedly conducted the talks with the knowledge of then Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Nicholas Veliotis, at

the time Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and now the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt.

Romberg said today, "We have contact with a variety of people who claim to have contact with the PLO." He said that when they ask what they should tell the PLO, they are told to repeat the U.S. conditions.

Robert McFarlane, President Reagan's National Security Advisor, said on a television panel program Sunday, the day the reports of the alleged secret U.S. contacts with the PLO were published, that he has "no personal knowledge of any such contact and I'm very confident the President was unaware of any such contact if they took place." McFarlane, appearing on the ABC-TV "This Week With David Brinkley" program said he was "very puzzled" by the report.

Dinitz: No Substance To The Report

In a report from Jerusalem today, Israel's former Ambassador to the U.S. Simcha Dinitz indicated his belief that there was no substance to the report of unofficial U.S. contacts with the PLO. Interviewed on Voice of Israel Radio, Dinitz said he did not see a weakening of the U.S. position on the PLO.

According to Dinitz, if President Carter could not find a way to bypass the 1975 U.S. commitment made by then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger not to talk to the PLO until it accepted the American condition, it was hardly likely that President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz would be doing it. Dinitz added, however, "We must distinguish between the exploratory level that was going on throughout in one way or another and the political commitment which remains sound."

According to the account published Sunday in The New York Times, "current and former Administration officials said the Mroz mission was authorized by Alexander M. Haig, Jr., who was then Secretary of State in August, 1981 after Washington received a suggestion from Mr. Arafat about secret talks ... Mr. Haig told President Reagan in a private meeting in California of his plan to have Mr. Mroz sound out the PLO position and later told his aides that Mr. Reagan approved the idea."

The account said, "From August, 1981 to May, 1982, Mr. Mroz had more than 50 meetings with Mr. Arafat totalling more than 400 hours." Only a handful of U.S. and PLO officials were aware of these talks. Veliotis was described as Mroz's "chief contact in Washington."

Mroz was identified in the account as the 35-year-old president of the East-West Security Foundation who was director of Middle East Studies at the International Academy of Peace in New York when the effort with the PLO began.

According to the account, "Although Mr. Haig had often condemned the PLO for its terrorist activities, he was persuaded by Mr. Veliotis to try to split the Palestinians away from the Soviet Union and make it easier to achieve progress in the Middle East."

The account said further that after the PLO's defeat in Lebanon in 1982, Secretary Shultz authorized Mroz in September, 1982 to make one more effort to revive the talks but Arafat, who was then in Tunis, refused to see him.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Herut Central Committee has voted by a narrow majority to nominate Haim Aharon, Israel's Ambassador to Colombia, as candidate for the chairmanship of the Jewish Agency's aliya department.

With The Presidents Conference In Israel: 4 DAYS OF PRESSURE COOKER INFORMATION By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Last week's mission to Israel by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations was four days of pressure cooker information gathering. The some 70 men and women participating were busy from early morning to late in the evening listening to and questioning Cabinet Ministers and other government officials on all aspects of Israeli life.

The meetings were held mostly in the Jerusalem Hilton which is not too close to the attractions of the Old City or the downtown shopping area. The group was taken to Tel Aviv one afternoon, but that was for briefings at the Ministry of Defense preceded by a luncheon with Israel's editors with the participants questioning the journalists in a reverse press conference.

The group got around a little more on the last day, going to the President's house to meet President Chaim Herzog and to City Hall to see Mayor Teddy Kollek, but they were briefed at both places too.

In between, the Jewish National Fund took them to see two of its forests that are being built to make up a "greenbelt" around Jerusalem. The mission ended with a dinner at the Knesset addressed by Premier Yitzhak Shamir from where those who were returning to the United States were whisked to Ben Gurion Airport.

Institutionalizing A Dialogue

Moshe Gilboa, director of the Foreign Ministry's World Jewish Affairs Division, who served as host along with Harry Hurwitz, an advisor to the Premier, said the four-day event was seen by the Israeli government as a way to "institutionalize" the dialogue with the Presidents Conference. All of the participants had been to Israel many times before, either individually or with their organizations, but never before as a Presidents Conference delegation.

"This was the first time that we had a profound elaborate, heart-to-heart dialogue," Gilboa told the three American Jewish journalists who accompanied the mission. The three were Jerome Lippman, publisher and editor-in-chief of the Jewish World of Long Island, N.Y., David Gross, editor of The Jewish Week of New York, and this reporter. Gilboa stressed that the Jewish leaders not only heard Cabinet Ministers but also the experts and technicians who help devise policy.

Julius Berman, chairman of the Presidents Conference, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, that while in the U.S. visiting Israelis brief the Conference on political issues, in Israel they were getting a better understanding of all aspects of Israeli life, economic and social, as well as political and military affairs.

Berman also stressed that the meetings helped create a better understanding for future discussions between the Israeli government and the Presidents Conference. "They learned what is on our minds and we learned what is on their minds," he said.

In addition, the Americans were able to demonstrate that on issues Israel face they share a feeling of "identification" with the Israelis, Berman said. "We are one people," he stressed. "When they hurt we cry, when things go well, we express happiness."

The mission took place against the background of a week during which the government of President Amin Gemayel and U.S. policy in Lebanon seemed on the verge of collapsing. The Israeli officials from Shamir and Defense Minister Moshe Arens on down made it clear that Israel opposes the abrogation by Lebanon of the May 17 agreement with Lebanon. Most Israelis want to leave Lebanon but it was made clear the army would not be withdrawn until Israel is sure that its northern border will be secure.

A full day was devoted to the economic situation, and while the Israelis stressed that there would have to be budget cuts and a decrease in the standard of living, they seemed optimistic that Israel's 200 percent inflation could be reduced.

The chief basis for this was hope that the large balance of payments deficit could be cut by a billion dollars this year. But the hope for the future is a belief that Israel will move into the high tech export market in a major way and that many foreign companies will build plants there.

Aliya Is Stressed

Another theme that was stressed was aliya. The need for American Jews to immigrate to Israel was urged not only by Leon Dulzin, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives, but by many of the government officials. It was put strongest by Col. Ron Ben-Ishai, head of the Israel Army Radio, who said during the meeting with the editors that if American Jews wanted to have influence on Israel they had to make aliya.

Perhaps the unexpected dividend of the four-days was the closeness that developed among the participants. They represented all of the movements in Jewish life from Reform to Orthodox, from Labor Zionism to Herut, as well as the various communal groups, yet they all seemed to get along.

Berman summed it up at the Knesset when he noted that they had all met together as part of the Presidents Conference in New York or Washington, "but we had to come to Israel to really get to know each other."

POLL SHOWS LABOR WINNING OVER LIKUD IF ELECTION WERE HELD NOW

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- A public opinion poll published here indicated that the Labor Alignment would score a decisive victory over Likud if Knesset elections were to be held now.

According to the survey by the Madi'in Ezrachi pollsters, published in Maariv last Friday, the Alignment would win an absolute majority of 61 seats in the 120-member Knesset to 37 seats for Likud. In theory, such a result would allow Labor to govern without coalition partners. Labor's "natural" allies, Shulamit Aloni's Civil Rights Movement and the Shinui Party, would win one seat and two seats, respectively, in elections now, according to the poll.

The poll found that the National Religious Party would lose one seat, reducing its Knesset mandate from six to five. The Aguda Israel Party would retain its four seats, Tami its three, and Tehiya three.

LONDON (JTA) -- Saudi Arabia last week gave a check for \$28.5 million to the Al Fatah representative in Riyadh as its latest installment of financial support for the PLO, the World Jewish Congress reported.