

SPECIAL TO THE JTA SOLOMON INVOLVED IN LATEST RESCUE MISSION OF ETHIOPIAN JEWS BELIEVES ALL OF THEM NOW OUT OF THE SUDAN

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, March 27 (JTA) -- Sen. Alan Cranston (D. Calif.) said he believes that all Ethiopian Jews previously stranded in the Sudan when Israel was forced to halt its rescue operation last January are now out of that country following last week's secret airlift of Ethiopian Jews, conducted by the United States.

In a telephone interview from Washington, Cranston also disclosed details of his efforts last month which led to all 100 members of the Senate signing a letter to President Reagan urging that the Administration seek permission from the Sudanese President, Gaafar al-Nimeiry, "for the immediate resumption of the airlift."

The letter, dated February 21, noted Nimeiry's earlier comments in a New York Times interview in which he stated that the "Ethiopian Jews and all other refugees now living in the Sudanese camps were free to leave the country provided they did not go directly to Israel."

According to Cranston, the Administration's response to the letter was very positive. He received a telephone call from Reagan saying he shared the concern of the Senators on the deteriorating situation in the refugee camps, and later a telephone call from Vice President George Bush indicating his concern for the Ethiopian Jews.

Cranston said he was particularly seeking to draw the attention of Bush to the issue since Bush was scheduled to visit the Sudan in early March. "I figured that this was the time for a breakthrough," Cranston told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Bush Laid The Groundwork

It has been reported in several leading newspapers that Bush successfully laid the groundwork for last week's airlift when he met with Nimeiry in Khartoum on March 6. The rescue mission is reported to have been conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency, along with the aid of the State Department and the U.S. Air Force.

Several hundred Jewish refugees were airlifted in a precise, three-hour operation that began in the early morning last Friday on an airstrip near the town of Gedaref. The Los Angeles Times correspondent, Charles Powers, who first reported the airlift, wrote that "a quiet but diligent search was made of all the refugee camps in eastern Sudan, where the Ethiopian Jews... were likely to be found."

Powers reported this week that five Ethiopian Jews were located in a camp called Um Rakoba about 40 miles inside the Sudanese border, "a refugee camp where almost 1,200 Jews died last summer after they had trekked out of their homeland in Gondar Province in Ethiopia, fleeing famine."

Powers reported that the five Ethiopian Jews were moved to the Tawawa refugee camp outside Gedaref where they were later moved with other Ethiopian Jews to the airstrip for the airlift. It is reported that the Ethiopian Jews were flown to Israel

in the C-130 Hercules transport planes. The letter from the Senate noted that premature disclosure of the Israeli sponsored airlift forced a halt in the operation. But it said that it had left a large number of Ethiopian Jews stranded in Sudan.

"Tragically the survival of these people is in jeopardy and they are at special risk," the letter said. "Afraid of being identified as Jews in a Moslem country, these refugees in particular have been afraid to seek food or medical aid from international relief agencies. This explains the devastatingly high mortality rate among Ethiopian Jews. Over 2,000 have died in recent months and more are dying daily"

Swift, Unified Support Cited

Cranston described as "unprecedented" the quick and swift support his colleagues exhibited when asked about signing the letter to the President. He added that he viewed it as "quite remarkable" that all members of the Senate had knowledge of the letter and that it was kept a secret until this week.

He said publicity about the letter or the Administration's undertaking for a rescue mission could have hindered any efforts to aid Ethiopian Jews in the Sudan. He said Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R. NY) also worked behind the scenes to gain support of the Senate.

Cranston said "not a single one hesitated in terms of signing" the letter, adding that there was a genuine eagerness on behalf of the Senate to join in the effort. "This shows the Senate can keep a secret," Cranston said.

Cranston said that he had been in contact with officials of the American Association for Ethiopian Jewry that provided him with updates and information regarding the situation of the Ethiopian Jews.

U.S.-ISRAEL FTA ACCORD SEEMS TO BE HEADED TOWARD CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 27 (JTA) -- The recently concluded U.S.-Israel Free Trade Area (FTA) agreement appeared today to be headed toward its expected swift congressional approval, as the Senate Finance Committee rejected proposed amendments to the pact.

Having turned down three minor technical modifications, the Committee voted to begin consultations with the House and Administration on preparing legislation in support of the pact initiated by Israel and the U.S. earlier this month.

The FTA provides for the gradual elimination by both the U.S. and Israel of tariffs on goods traded between them. According to the pact, duties on items regarded as sensitive to import competition will be phased out more slowly than others, with all tariffs and other trade barriers to be eliminated within 10 years.

Although Congress has already given its approval to conclude the agreement in principle, through its passage of the Tariff and Trade Act of 1984, the pact itself must be approved by both Houses of Congress once final legislation is formally introduced by the President.

The 1984 legislation also stipulates that the agreement would be considered for approval by Congress on an expedited basis. It was this pledge to "fast track"

the President's bill through Congress that provided the justification for the Committee's refusal to introduce amendments suggested today, including one by Committee chairman Robert Packwood (R. Ore.)

Packwood's amendment would have authorized the President to phase out tariffs on all goods within 10 years in accordance with the agreement. The President's version excludes certain import sensitive items leaving them to subsequent approval by Congress. The House Ways and Means Committee has already adopted a similar amendment to the one proposed by Packwood.

The clear indication given by the majority of Committee members, that they would reject any change that might delay the final drafting and approval of the bill, caused some resentment on the part of those seeking more extensive debate of the agreement that might address concern about the American textile and footwear industries in particular, and the timing for Israel's phasing out subsidies on export goods.

If the understanding is that no amendment can be made, George Mitchell (D. Me.) who introduced one of the amendments told the Committee, "then the consultation process of this committee is annulled, it's a charade, it's a farce." But Packwood also defended the swift consideration of the pact, saying it was keeping with the Congressional premise to fast-track the bill.

Although some compromise is expected on the exact wording of the bill to be formally introduced by the President, a staff member of the Senate Finance Committee said the agreement was virtually guaranteed swift Congressional approval.

RABIN REFUSES TO GIVE SPECIFIC DEADLINE FOR TOTAL IDF WITHDRAWAL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 27 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin said today he anticipated no delays or blackages at the Cabinet level in the decisions to complete the Israel Defense Force's withdrawal from Lebanon. But he cautiously refused to cite a specific deadline for the completion. However, Premier Shimon Peres, speaking yesterday in Upper Nazareth, said the withdrawal would be completed "much quicker than a lot of people think."

Informed sources have spoken of early-to-mid-May as the likely timing for the final pullback across the international border.

Rabin repeatedly reiterated his stern warnings this week that his policy after the withdrawal would be one of "live and let live -- or the reverse." Addressing the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee yesterday, he spoke of a "scorched earth" policy which Israel would not hesitate to institute vis-a-vis south Lebanon, and specifically the Shiite population there, if the terrorist attacks continued after the pullback.

Rabin said he would envisage hitting at targets "forty or even eighty kilometers" inside Lebanon if the operational requirements of the fight against terrorism dictated this.

The Defense Minister has been speaking with an increasingly dour and somber tone about the future outlook. He told the Knesset committee yesterday that the Shiite terror danger now was more of a challenge than the PLO threat had been before 1982.

Peres, however, has taken a more upbeat approach in his public statements. In Nazareth, he told hundreds of local high schoolers he was "not disturbed" by the bleak prognoses of ongoing Shiite terror after

the IDF withdraws. He said the Shiites would "have plenty to occupy themselves with" inside Lebanon and would therefore not continue their attacks.

IDF SEARCHES SHIITE VILLAGE

TEL AVIV, March 27 (JTA) -- The Shiite village of Shehur, about 18 kilometers east of Tyre, was searched by the Israel Defense Force today for terrorists and weapons.

According to sources of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), 150 of the village's male population were ordered to assemble on the soccer field for interrogation. At the same time, soldiers searched their homes where their wives and children were confined, the UNIFIL sources said. The operation was observed by the Finnish contingent of UNIFIL.

The IDF reported meanwhile four attempted attacks on army posts and units in south Lebanon last night and this morning. There were no casualties.

ISRAEL'S ENVOY TO FRANCE PREVENTED FROM DELIVERING LECTURE AT A UNIVERSITY BY PRO-PALESTINIAN STUDENTS

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, March 27 (JTA) -- Israel's Ambassador to France, Ovadia Soffer, has publicly protested the failure of Le Mans Law School president Jean Pierre Gelard to call the police when some 200 pro-Palestinian students prevented the Israeli envoy from delivering a scheduled lecture at the school, about 100 miles southwest of Paris, last night.

The students, mainly Palestinians and North Africans, blocked the entrance to the lecture hall, waved anti-Israel posters and shouted anti-Israel slogans through bull horns. French law authorizes the head of a university to summon police to campuses to quell disturbances. But Gelard refused to exercise his authority in this instance.

A spokesman for the university said today that Gelard had written Soffer warning him of possible trouble. He also told the envoy that he would not meet with him, a normal courtesy to a visiting lecturer, because he personally opposed Israel's policies in south Lebanon.

Soffer protested what he said was Gelard's "refusal to fulfill his responsibilities." He said he would continue his lecture tour of several French universities.

A large proportion of the Le Mans Law Schools' students are Palestinians, Moroccans and Tunisians. The honorary president of the Jewish community in Le Mans, Jacques Isar, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the community had not been informed in advance of the Ambassador's scheduled lecture.

He said that if the 150 Jewish families in the city had known Soffer was to be there, they would have tried to mobilize public opinion on Israel's behalf and to arrange for more Jewish and pro-Israel students to be on hand.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Sixty-one Knesset members submitted a petition to Premier Shimon Peres on Tuesday asking him to intervene to allow a woman to be an El Al pilot. The unusual petition dealt with Yael Nahamias, whom El Al reportedly refuses to accept as a pilot.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE OTHER FACE OF ISRAEL

By Murray Zuckoff

(The fourth article in a series.)

NABLUS, March 27 (JTA) — The West Bank is a time bomb waiting to explode. The West Bank is a foundry where suspicion, hatred and hostility is being forged. The West Bank is a series of political Rorschach ink blots waiting to be interpreted.

The West Bank is a fragile and uneasy mix of Jews and Arabs. The West Bank is a maze of super highways and superannuated roads, the first leading to Jewish settlements, the latter to Arab towns and villages. The West Bank is fear. The West Bank is none of these in isolation but all of these inextricably interwoven.

On the 60-kilometer drive from Jerusalem, along hairpin turns through mountains and valleys, desolate, craggy, moon-like landscapes are the pervasive designs. Occasionally, there is a stretch of green denoting some plant life and a few meager crops, a stretch of olive trees basking in the warm spring sun, some furrowed fields waiting for the first signs of crops to emerge, and lifeless terraced mountains once fruitful but now barren.

Israeli soldiers, in their teens or barely out of them, stand forlornly, two each, in front of refugee camps while inside the camps youngsters and adults roam through mud streets and live in conditions of squalor and penury. These camps are seething with resentment and anger and spawn tomorrow's fighters against the "Zionist entity."

On the roads, a lonely merchant in an occasional tourist shop or cafe lachadassically waits for a customer and when one comes along, laconically and perfunctorily goes through the motions of human relations.

Silence And Violence

On most days the area is smothered in eerie silence, giving the impression of a dream-like apparition. There are no signs of people, other than in the main market squares or in and around schools, nor signs of Israeli soldiers nor border police. Unless there is trouble, they are inside the military compounds which are usually just on the outskirts of the larger cities.

But there are days when the area is punctuated with the sounds of violence, and the roads and streets are pock-marked with strewn rocks and Molotov cocktails and burning rubber tires filling the air with acrid smoke. Then, Israeli patrols are everywhere.

Nablus itself is reminiscent of an old tired movie set in which even Charles Boyer would rather be caught dead than alive. The city is on two levels: the lower is filled with shops, decrepit dwellings, and the casbah; the upper level is peppered with sun-drenched and bleached homes of the local middle class. The casbah, with labyrinthine alleyways and innumerable stalls, with hawking merchants and gawking customers and passerbys, is a sniper's paradise.

The main entrances and exits in the casbah were sealed off by the Israeli military government personnel to prevent terrorists from losing themselves in there and eluding the police and soldiers. One or two of the gateways were recently reopened after the local Arab officials promised to apprehend terrorists in the area. "We also did it as a sign of good will and trust," the local Israeli military government commander said.

Israeli soldiers and police are seldom to be seen in the casbah. It was a strange sight, therefore, for the denizens to see a convoy of armed Israeli soldiers marching through the casbah flanking an army spokesman, this reporter and Gil Sedan, the Israeli TV West Bank correspondent and correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, as they walked through the city streets and the casbah at the invitation of the local Israeli commander.

"This is an unusual scene," he said, "but we can't allow non-Arab persons to walk through the casbah by themselves. You could get killed and I'm sure you would rather make the headlines than be in the headlines." The commander was in his late twenties or early thirties, clean shaven with close cropped hair who looked more like a kibbutznik than a soldier.

He took the scene in his stride and engaged in light banter with this reporter and Sedan. Told that we appreciated the protection to either side of us, he smiled. Asked what we should do if someone armed approached us from up in front, he smiled again and said, "Duck." But on that day, we didn't have to.

Volcano Of Terrorist Preparation

Nablus is one of the cities on the West Bank where there have been anti-Israeli demonstrations. One reason for this, it was pointed out, is that the local university of Al Najah is a breeding place for PLO sympathizers and student agitators, similar to the situation at Bir Zeit University near Ramallah.

"When classes are in session the campuses are volcanoes of terrorist preparation and its lava flow spills onto the streets and highways," said one military government official. "When school lets out, things are quiet."

He minimized the perception which is prevalent outside the West Bank and Israel, that the West Bank is seething with organized armed mass resistance. "There is no such thing," he said, "because the people can't get together. There is too much competition between the PLO and other groups, especially the Moslem Brotherhood which lurks behind the scenes. Certainly most of the Arabs here hate Israel, but many also depend on Israel for jobs and many, especially the older Arabs and merchants, want to be left alone to ply their trade."

The official pointed out that what is frequently stressed in the press are the rock-throwing, fire-burning incidents and anti-Israeli pro-PLO demonstrations and attacks on Jewish settlers by teen-agers and their older mentors. "But what is overlooked is that while these incidents occur in a few large towns, most of the towns are quiet and without disturbances, such as Jericho and Jenin and other places. This, too, is part of the West Bank reality."

Pervasiveness Of PLO Propaganda

Another reality is the pervasiveness of PLO propaganda among Arab students and professors. But a great deal of this tends to be an unthinking, uncritical acceptance of emotion-laden and volatile anti-Zionist shibboleths and slogans. There is almost no effort to develop a coherent ideology and there is a penchant for gross distortion of history even in the face of contrary evidence. Dr. Morad Asi, an assistant professor of journalism at Najah University in Nablus, is one of these people.

During an interview at his home in Nablus, on a hill overlooking the university, he defined himself as a "moderate." But during the almost one-hour interview it became apparent that his moderateness was

was confined to his willingness to "talk to Jews and Zionists" but a total unwillingness -- or incapacity -- to reconsider his thinking.

A Zionist, he said, "is a person who thinks Palestine should be exclusively a Jewish state and that the land belongs to the Jews wherever it is. A Zionist is a person -- he doesn't have to be a Jew -- who believes that Palestine, the Holy Land or Israel, whatever you like to call it, belongs to the Jews and any other group doesn't belong there."

Would it be correct, given this approach, to define adherents and supporters of what he called the Palestine liberation movement as those who believe that Jews have no right to any part of Israel and should be driven out, he was asked.

"I don't think so," he answered. "This is a big misrepresentation by Zionist groups. Even if this was the view in the 1950's or 1960's, it was the view of immature people. No responsible person would say such a thing."

Did he recognize that there were different tendencies within the Zionist movement ranging from right to left, from secular to religious, who had different views about the Palestinian people? Asi offered a half-hearted yes.

Did he accept the fact that there were organizations like the Brit Shalom and Ichud in the 1930's and similar organizations today in Israel -- the Labor Party, Mapam, Peace Now -- which advocated peaceful coexistence with the Palestinian people and which did not seek territorial conquests? Again, a half-hearted yes.

"But," he added, "these are just ideas, ideas that have not been put into practice and those who try to put them into practice, like Emil Grunzweig (a Peace Now activist), get themselves killed by other Zionists."

Where Are The Palestinian Voices Of Reason?

Who, he was asked, are the Grunzweigs among the Palestinians and which are the organizations equivalent to those in Israel seeking coexistence with the Jewish State and recognizing its right to exist? He took time to sip some tea and then said, "the PLO."

But the PLO was responsible for the bloody massacres against unarmed civilians at Maalot, Avivim, Munich, along the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway, Paris, Amsterdam, Athens and along the Israel-Lebanon border. Was this how the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist? Asi cited attacks against Arab villages by "Zionists."

These acts, he was told, were condemned by the official Zionist leaders and by the Israeli government as acts of extremists. Where were similar condemnations of the PLO atrocities by Palestinians and who were they? Asi went into an explanation that defied the imagination. "Arabs react, they don't act," he said. "They react to attacks, they don't initiate them."

In Munich, he said, "the guerrillas didn't kill the Israeli athletes. The German police did and they tricked the guerrillas into participating. In Maalot, who started the shooting? On the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway, they wanted to go somewhere and negotiate with the Israelis, but Israeli troops attacked them." Pressed for proof and told that this view was totally without foundation, he looked at his watch and said it was time for him to leave for the university.

Asi is a mild-mannered, soft-spoken man, even gentle and sociable. He had worked in the United

States, he said, for various news agencies. There was not a trace of hostility, of animosity in his voice during the interview. It was all the more frightening -- and sad -- to hear him espouse such "moderate" views. If this was "moderate," what are the extremists saying?

'This Will All Belong To Them'

During the drive back to Jerusalem, the homes of the Jewish settlers in Elon Moreh could be seen on a verdant hill not far from Nablus. This reporter, Sedan and the army spokesman drove along a super highway into the settlement.

The streets were immaculately clean and the homes along the tree-lined streets and gardens evoked a totally different world, one of peace and serenity. The stucco homes had the appearance of stately mansions. They were all constructed by Arab labor with what was apparently loving care.

But why all that love and care, this reporter asked the army spokesman. "Because," he answered, "the Arabs feel that in a few years all this will belong to them."

(Next: A reporter's notebook)

TALKS BEGUN ON VOA TRANSMITTER

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 27 (JTA) -- Israeli and American diplomats and technicians began discussions here yesterday on the radio transmitter the U.S. wants to erect in Israel to relay Voice of America broadcasts behind the Iron Curtain.

The initial talks concerned the legal aspects of the agreement between the two countries, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Experts from both will be inspecting possible sites for the transmitter today and tomorrow and the teams will resume their talks on Friday. One site mentioned is near Shivta, an ancient Nabatean ruin in the western Negev.

The Israeli delegation is headed by Hanan Baron, deputy director general of the Foreign Ministry. The American team is led by Robert Flatten, the Charge d' Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, and Walter Roberts, executive director of the Board of International Broadcasting.

Israel agreed recently, after considerable pressure from the Reagan Administration, to permit a VOA transmitter on Israeli soil. The purpose is to beam VOA programs to the Soviet Union and Communist-bloc countries from a location where the Soviets will find it difficult to jam the signals. It was pointed out that Israel is geographically closer to the Soviet Union's Central Asian provinces than Western Europe.

Some Israelis had objected to the transmitter on grounds that it would involve Israel in the superpowers' propaganda war.

ISRAEL'S BULLS ARE THE BEST

TEL AVIV, March 27 (JTA) -- When it comes to breeding cattle, Israel's bulls are the best according to the results of a "best sperm contest" for bulllocks recently held in Poland. The Israeli breeders topped those of eight other participating countries, the Israel Cattle Raisers Association reported at its biennial conference in Kibbutz Shefayim yesterday. The result was that Israel is receiving orders from many countries for bulllocks and female calves. The cattlemen said members of their association exported 500 cows to Egypt in 1983 and 1,250 calves last year. They hope to sell 4,500 head of cattle to Egypt shortly.