

## **PLO, Jordanian and Israeli peace initiatives-Diplomatic developments-Israeli raid on PLO headquarters-Hijack of Achille Lauro**

*Diplomatic contacts following Hussein-Arafat accord (February-March 1985). Formation of Palestinian National Salvation Front (March 25). Further discussions on peace proposals (April-May). Israeli-Palestinian prisoner exchange (May 20). Attempts to establish framework for negotiations (May-September). Israeli offer of direct negotiations (June 10). Details of proposed Palestinian delegation (July). Arab League summit endorsement of Hussein-Arafat accord (Aug. 7-9). Israeli air strike on PLO headquarters in Tunis (Oct. 1). Hijack of Achille Lauro cruise ship (Oct. 7-9). Interception by US fighters of aircraft carrying hijackers and PLF leader (Oct. 10-11). First trial of hijackers (Nov. 18). Cancellation of meeting between UK government and PLO leaders (Oct. 14). Offer of 'territorial compromise' by Mr Peres (Oct. 17). Alleged Israeli-Jordanian 'condominium' plan (October). Mr Arafat's Cairo declaration on terrorism and the armed struggle (Nov. 7). PLO rejection of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 (Nov. 21). Invitation to Mr Peres from King Hassan of Morocco (Nov. 25).*

In the wake of the agreement on a joint peace initiative concluded in February 1985 between King Hussein of Jordan and Mr Yassir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)[see page 33494] there ensued a series of diplomatic contacts involving principally officials of the Jordanian, Egyptian, United States and Israeli governments and of the PLO, with the aim of establishing a framework for the commencement of negotiations on the future of the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Although the discussions were successful in narrowing the differences between the USA and Israel on the one hand and Jordan and the PLO on the other, their progress was impeded in October (i) by the Israeli air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis and (ii) the hijacking by PLO guerrillas of the Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro*.

[The fighting between PLO guerrillas and *Amal* militiamen in and around the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut will be covered in the next article on Lebanon.]

Developments in February and March following Jordanian-Palestinian agreement

Following his proposal that the US administration invite both Israeli representatives and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for talks in Washington [see page 33494] President Mubarak of Egypt suggested on Feb. 28 that the USA should first hold preparatory discussions with the Jordanian-Palestinian side, and then bring in the Israelis for further talks leading to the convening of an international peace conference. Mr Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister, welcomed President Mubarak's proposal as 'by and large positive', but stated on March 1 that

the proposed talks should involve direct negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian team, with the proviso that the latter should not include any PLO members.

A spokesman for the US State Department said that the USA was willing 'to re-engage in the peace process'. PLO officials criticized the plan as a deviation from the Hussein-Arafat accord.

In an interview with the *New York Times* published on March 2, Mr Arafat criticized the US government's refusal to recognize the Jordanian-PLO agreement. He refused to endorse explicitly UN security Council Resolution 242 of 1967 (which would have implied recognition of Israel—see page 33493-94), but confirmed his continued adherence to his agreement with King Hussein (which called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied areas 'on the basis of UN and security Council resolutions').

During a meeting on March 6, President Mubarak and King Hussein agreed that the PLO alone could represent the Palestinians in negotiations, but added that they were in favour of direct contacts between the US government and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

President Mubarak visited France on March 8, where he reportedly secured the support of President Mitterrand for a settlement on the basis of the Hussein-Arafat accord. He travelled on to the USA on March 9 for inconclusive talks with President Reagan, who favoured direct negotiations between Israel and Jordan on the basis of Resolution 242, as did Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the UK Prime Minister, with whom President Mubarak met on March 13. Both Dr Helmut Kohl, the West German Chancellor, and Signor Bettino Craxi, the Italian Prime Minister, however, reportedly assured President Mubarak of their support for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian solution.

#### Formation of anti-Arafat Palestinian front

A number of Palestinian guerrilla groups opposed to Mr Arafat and the 'loyalist' wing of the PLO announced the formation of the 'Palestinian National Salvation Front' (PNSF) in Damascus, the Syrian capital, on March 25, 1985. [For the history of the split within the PLO, see 32457 A; 32649 A; 33186 A; 33492 A.]

The front was set up to work for the 'abrogation' of the Hussein-Arafat accord (which had been denounced by the Syrian government—see page 33494) and for the consolidation of a 'strategic alliance' with Syria. Besides the four members of the 'National Alliance', i. e. the *Fatah* Provisional Revolutionary Council, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) and *Al-Saiqa* [see page 33492 the new front also included the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, led by Dr Georges Habash), a member of the 'Democratic Alliance' of PLO groups, which had in the past sought to mediate between the rebel and loyalist wings of the organization [ibid.].

Mr Arafat's contacts with Jordan were denounced by PNSF leaders at the close of a meeting on April 16.

During the remainder of 1985, the PNSF and other anti-Arafat groupings remained firmly opposed to the PLO Chairman's attempts to reach agreements with Jordan and Egypt, which they portrayed as 'depriving the PLO of its right to independent representation'. The PNSF was generally supported by Syria, Libya and Iran, although Syrian relations with Jordan continued to improve during the year.

Further discussions on peace proposals, April to May

King Hussein held talks with Mr Arafat on April 10, and Mr Arafat met a group of US congressmen two days later. At the beginning of April, Mr Peres had suggested that Palestinians on the West Bank might be given limited powers of self-government during the period leading up to a final settlement.

Mr Richard Murphy, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, met with King Hussein on April 14 at the start of a two-week tour which included discussions with the leaders of Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and also with three West Bank Palestinians—Mr Elias Freij, the mayor of Bethlehem, Mr Rashid Shawa, the deposed mayor of Gaza and Mr Mustafa Natshe, the deposed mayor of Hebron[see page 32763]

During his meetings, Mr Murphy was understood to be discussing the possibility of limited US involvement in dialogue with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian team composed of non-PLO members. It was also reported that he had suggested that Israel might agree to accept PLO representatives on the team if the PLO agreed to recognize Israel's right to exist.

A meeting of the PLO's executive committee [see page 33494] held in Baghdad on April 28, reiterated its opposition to the inclusion in a negotiating team of any non-PLO Palestinians, who were warned by Mr Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad—the head of the military and security section of the PLO) 'to shun Israel and America, or you will be dealt with as traitors'.

The problem of deciding on an acceptable Palestinian component of the joint delegation was addressed during a visit to Israel, Jordan and Egypt by Mr George Shultz, the US Secretary of State, on May 10–13. After talks with leaders in all three countries, Mr Shultz described the immediate task as 'finding people who are truly recognized as representing the Palestinians and who also have a background which would be acceptable in the negotiating process'. He added subsequently that 'different people may be needed [in the delegation] for different purposes'.

The US administration was reported at this time to be willing to accept members of the Palestine National Council (PNC—the PLO's 'parliament-in-exile'-see 33492 A) as part of the delegation, provided that they were not members of any PLO guerrilla groups. This idea was opposed by the Israeli government, however, which portrayed the PNC as a constituent part of the PLO.

In an interview published in the *Washington Post* on May 14, Mr Arafat said that the PLO was willing to endorse Resolution 242 if the USA explicitly recognized the Palestinian right to 'self-determination' (a phrase which had been previously interpreted by the PLO to imply the establishment of a Palestinian state).

## Israeli-Palestinian prisoner exchange

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on May 20 supervised the exchange of three Israeli soldiers, held by the PFLP-GC since their capture in Lebanon in June 1982, for 1,155 Palestinian and other prisoners held by Israel. Negotiations leading to the agreement were reported to have lasted over 18 months and to have been mediated by Dr Bruno Kreisky, the former Austrian Chancellor.

Of those released by Israel, 879 had been detained in the West Bank and Gaza strip on security grounds and 150 had been transferred to Israel in April from the Ansar prison camp in Lebanon[see page 33688] The remainder included other Palestinian and Arab detainees, as well as Mr Kozo Okamoto, a member of the Japanese Red Army group which had carried out the massacre at Lod airport in 1972; [see 25365 A; 25440 A]. 397 were released in Geneva, Switzerland (where the three Israeli soldiers were also freed), 153 in Kuneitra (in the Golan Heights) and the remainder in the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Israel itself.

The unequal nature of the exchange was strongly criticized by right-wing parties in Israel and by groups of settlers on the West Bank, some of whom threatened to take action against those released. Palestinians who had gathered to welcome home the released detainees in Hebron and Bethlehem were dispersed by settlers firing into the air. Mr Itzhak Rabin, the Defence Minister, warned on May 21 that those freed in Israeli-controlled areas would be rearrested if any further attempt was made to hold Israeli soldiers to ransom.

Further attempts to establish framework for negotiations, May to July

King Hussein held talks with President Reagan on May 29–31, during which, according to Mr Tahir Nashat al-Masri, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, he suggested a first-stage process; first the PLO would recognize Israel's right to exist in return for US recognition of the 'self-determination' right; a joint Jordanian-PLO team would then hold preparatory talks with US officials, leading to the convening of an international conference (under the auspices of the UN Security Council); this conference would pave the way for direct talks between the Jordanian-PLO team and Israel. Mr Peres criticized the conference proposal on May 31 as 'a device to evade direct negotiations'.

The US State Department on May 30 announced that it would be willing to consider Soviet participation in the peace process on condition that the Soviet Union (i) agreed to resume diplomatic relations with Israel [see page 34009] for recent Israeli-Soviet contacts; (ii) ended the dissemination of 'anti-semitic propaganda'; (iii) improved the treatment of Soviet Jews and allowed unrestricted Jewish emigration; and (iv) ceased supplying arms to Lebanese militia groups. The Soviet government rejected the imposition of conditions, but was reported in early June to have notified Jordan of its desire to be involved in the peace process.

In a speech to the *Knesset* (Israeli parliament) on June 10, Mr Peres called for direct negotiations with Jordan 'under conditions of equality', within the framework of a five-stage timetable as follows: (i) informal contacts in the USA with US, Egyptian and Jordanian officials and non-PLO Palestinians; (ii) the establishment of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli committee to prepare

an agenda for a peace conference; (iii) confirmation of the support of the five permanent members of the UN security Council for direct negotiations; (iv) the nomination of 'authentic Palestinian representatives from the occupied territories who will represent the stance of the inhabitants and who will be acceptable to all sides'; and (v) the convocation within three months of a peace conference which would include direct talks between Israel and a Jordanian delegation containing the Palestinian representatives as well as Jordanian officials.

Mr Peres's proposals were described by the US State Department as maintaining 'the momentum towards direct negotiations' and received sympathetic coverage in the pro-government media in Jordan and Egypt.

French efforts to maintain the momentum of the peace process included a meeting in late June between government officials and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian team comprising Mr Abdel Wahab al *Majali*, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Masri, Mr Khaled al Hassan, a *Fatah* central committee member and chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the PNC, and Mr Jawad al Hussein, president of the PLO's Palestinian National Fund. M Roland Dumas, the French Foreign Minister, visited Cairo at the beginning of July, while M Claude Cheysson, the previous Foreign Minister and currently a member of the European Communities' Commission with responsibility for the Mediterranean and North-South relations, held talks with Mr Arafat in Tunis at the same time. Mr Khalaf visited Paris on July 24 for talks on 'problems of terrorism' and the Palestinian issue with M Pierre Joxe, the French Interior Minister. During the talks, Mr Khalaf emphasized that the PLO was opposed to all terrorism.

The PLO was reported in mid-July to have submitted a list of 22 Palestinians to the Jordanian government for consideration as a basis for the Palestinian component of the joint delegation. The Jordanians passed on seven of the 22 names to the US administration, which in turn transmitted them to the Israeli government. According to Israeli and Palestinian press reports, the seven were:

Mr Khaled al Hassan (i) [see above]; (ii) Dr Hatem Husseini, former head of the Palestine Information Office in Washington and currently a lecturer at a US university; (iii) Mr Saleh Ta'amri, who was married to Dina, a former wife of King Hussein, and who had been commander of the *Fatah* youth corps in Lebanon at the time of the Israeli invasion, was captured and detained at Ansar and negotiated with Israeli officials over the release of the camp's inmates; (iv) Mr Nabil Shaat, a Cairo businessman with a degree from an American university, a member of the PNC and a close associate of Mr Arafat; (v) Mr Hanna Seniora, editor-in-chief of the Palestinian newspaper *Al Fajr*; (vi) Mr Mohammed Sbeigh, secretary-general of the PNC; and (vii) Mr Faez Abu Rahme, chairman of the Gaza Chamber of Advocates.

The Israeli Cabinet on July 16 rejected the seven as unacceptable. On the same day Mr Peres met with Mr Freij (the mayor of Bethlehem) and Mr Hikmat al Masri, a leading West Bank resident and uncle of the Jordanian Foreign Minister, for what he described as 'useful and interesting' talks. Israel radio quoted officials on July 23 as saying that Mr Peres had informed the *Knesset* foreign affairs and defence committee that he regarded Mr Seniora and Mr Rahme as acceptable negotiators.

In the first high-level contact between Libya and the loyalist PLO since 1982, Mr Farouk Kaddoumi (the PLO's 'Foreign Minister') visited Tripoli on July 28 for talks with Col. Moamer al Kadhafi, the Libyan leader.

#### Arab League summit

The final communique of a summit meeting of Arab League leaders, held in Casablanca (Morocco), on Aug. 7–9, welcomed the Jordanian-Palestinian accord as a 'plan of action to implement the Arab peace plan for the achievement of a peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement guaranteeing the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from all occupied Arab territories... and securing the regaining of the national rights of the Palestinian Arab people'. The meeting viewed the accord as compatible with the Fez peace plan of 1982 (which called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its *capital*—see page 32037).

In a further attempt to break the deadlock over Palestinian representation in any proposed negotiations, Mr Murphy visited Jordan, Israel and Egypt on Aug. 13–18. US sources at this time reported that four of the seven proposed Palestinians, namely Mr Seniora, Mr Rahme, Mr Shaat and Mr Sbeigh, were regarded as acceptable by the US administration.

Little progress was made during the visit, with the Jordanian government continuing to insist on an international conference, including PLO representation, as the sole acceptable framework for discussions, while Israeli leaders emphasized the importance of direct negotiations between Israel and Jordan.

Mrs Thatcher (the UK Prime Minister) visited Cairo for talks with President Mubarak on Sept. 17, and travelled on to Amman the following day for discussions with King Hussein. During her stay in Jordan, she also visited a Palestinian refugee camp outside the capital. On Sept. 20 Mrs Thatcher announced that two members of the PLO executive committee, Bishop Iliya Khuri and Mr Mohammed Milhim, had been invited to the UK together with Mr Majali and Mr Masri for talks with Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. Although the two were described by Mrs Thatcher as 'men of peace' who were 'opposed to terrorism and violence', the invitation provoked an official protest from the Israeli government.

US involvement in the peace process was discussed when President Reagan met with President Mubarak on Sept. 23 and with King Hussein on Sept. 30. Although the essential points of difference remained, President Reagan praised King Hussein for taking 'steps towards peace', while the King repeated earlier condemnations of violence and said that Jordan stood by its commitment to a settlement on the basis of Resolution 242.

#### Israeli air strike on PLO headquarters in Tunis

Israeli aircraft on Oct. 1 bombed the PLO's headquarters at Borj Cedria, 12 miles south of Tunis, destroying several buildings and killing between 45 and 70 people. PLO sources said that 45 PLO staff and about 20 Tunisian civilians were killed, and that a further 100 people were

wounded. Mr Arafat, who was unexpectedly away from the site at the time of the attack, was confirmed as a target of the raid by Maj.-Gen. Moshe Levi, the Israeli Chief of Staff.

The raid, which was the deepest Israeli strike since the operation to free hijacked passengers at Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976 [see 27888 A], was carried out by between six and eight Mirage aircraft, which were refuelled during the flight from Israel.

Mr Rabin (the Israeli Defence Minister) stated that the 'action was intended to warn that there is no immunity for any PLO group anywhere in the world and that the long arm of the IDF [the Israeli Defence Forces] will know how to find them and how to hurt them'. Mr Peres stated on Oct. 2 that the raid was in revenge for the killing of Israeli tourists in Larnaca, Cyprus, on Sept. 25 [see page 34000.] The raid was fiercely denounced in the Arab world, with the Egyptian government cancelling a scheduled round of talks with Israel on the Taba dispute [see pages 33820-21]. It was also condemned by the UK and other European Community member countries and by Japan.

US official reaction to the raid was at first varied. In response to reporters' questions on Oct. 1 President Reagan commented that any country had the right to retaliate against terrorists, so long as it could pinpoint those responsible, and he implied that the Israelis had been successful in doing so. Mr Larry Speakes, the presidential spokesman, said that the raid amounted to 'a legitimate response to terrorism'. However, Mr Shultz stated that the US 'deplored acts of violence in the region, including this act', and added that 'we need to be clear in our opposition to acts of violence from whatever quarter they come, and without respect to the presumed rationale for them'.

The President's reaction was strongly criticized by Arab media, and resulted in a number of anti-US demonstrations in Arab capitals, including Tunis and Cairo. Accusations were made by Mr Arafat, by the Iranian and Libyan governments, and by the political bureau of the ruling Tunisian *Parti socialiste destourien*, that the Israeli aircraft had been refuelled by US tankers. The accusations were strongly denied by both the US and Israeli governments. On Oct. 2 President Reagan sent a message of condolences to President Bourguiba of Tunisia. Two days later, the USA abstained from voting on a UN security Council resolution, passed by 14 votes to none, which condemned 'vigorously the act of armed aggression perpetrated by Israel against Tunisian territory in flagrant violation of the UN Charter, international law and norms of conduct'. The resolution stated that Tunisia had a 'right to reparations'.

#### Hijack of *Achille Lauro* cruise ship

The Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro* was hijacked en route from Alexandria to Port Said (both in Egypt) on Oct. 7 by four Palestinian guerrillas who, it later transpired, were members of the Tunis-based faction of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF—a constituent part of the PLO—see below). Under the hijackers' directions, the ship, with 180 passengers and 331 crew on board (approximately 600 of the passengers having disembarked at Alexandria), sailed northwards to an area off Tartus, on the Syrian coast, then headed west towards Cyprus before returning to Port Said on Oct. 9. During the period of the hijacking, the guerrillas demanded the release of 50 Palestinian prisoners from Israel, and threatened to kill the passengers. At one point, on Oct. 8,

they claimed to have shot two of them. After lengthy negotiations on Oct. 9 with Egyptian and Italian officials and two PLO members, Mr Hani el-Hassan and another referred to as 'Abu Khaled' (who was subsequently identified as the PLF leader Mr Mahmoud Abul Abbas, also known as 'Abu Abbas' and, less recently, as 'Abu Mazin'), the hijackers surrendered, reportedly in return for free passage out of Egypt.

[For previous incidence of a politically motivated ship hijack, in 1961 when opponents of the Portugese dictatorship had hijacked the *Santa Maria*, see 17951 A.]

Contrary to reports which emerged during the negotiations that none of the passengers had been harmed, it became clear shortly after the hijackers' surrender that a disabled American Jewish passenger, Mr Leon Klinghoffer, had been shot dead and thrown overboard by one of the guerrillas off Tartus on Oct. 8. Mr Klinghoffer's body was subsequently washed ashore and handed over to the US authorities by the Syrian government. A post-mortem examination revealed on Oct. 16 that he had died of two bullet wounds. Prior to this, both the PLO and the Egyptian government had questioned the validity of the reports of his death.

The identity and affiliation of those responsible for the hijack remained unclear for some time. The Israeli government portrayed the action as a deliberate attempt by Mr Arafat and the PLO to prevent further progress towards peace negotiations. The operation was widely denounced in Arab and Palestinian circles, with both the mainstream PLO and the anti-Arafat Damascus-based groups condemning it. The hijackers themselves said that they were members of the PLF, although Mr Arafat denied that members of any PLO groups were involved, and the Damascus-based PLF under Mr Talat Yacoub, disclaimed responsibility. It was only after the surrender of the hijackers that it became clear that the operation had been mounted by the Tunis-based breakaway wing of the PLF, which was led by Mr Abbas.

The PLF itself had originally been created by Mr Yacoub as a breakaway from Mr Ahmed Jabril's PFLP-GC. Mr Abbas (38) had joined the PLF on its formation, but had led a breakaway pro-Arafat loyalist faction, which had subsequently based itself in Tunis, when the main PLF declared against Mr Arafat [for reports of divisions within the PLF in early 1984 see page 33187], A third PLF faction, led by Mr Abdel Fatah Ghanem, was based in Libya. The Arabic service of Radio Monte Carlo on Sept. 14 carried a report stating that the PLF had held 'its seventh congress' in Tunis on Sept. 13-14, and that it had passed a resolution opposing the Hussein-Arafat accord. The radio also reported a news conference in which Mr Abbas, whom it described as 'the new secretary-general of the PLF', promised that the PLF would 'continue the struggle, using all means and methods, for PLO unity and legitimate leadership'.

In an interview with the Middle East News Agency on Oct. 12, Mr Abbas confirmed earlier reports that the hijackers had been under orders to use the liner only as a means of transport to the Israeli port of Ashdod (where it had been scheduled to call), and had not intended to take it over. He added that they had been precipitated into the hijack when they were discovered in a cabin cleaning their weapons. The *International Herald Tribune* of Oct. 23 quoted a 'senior PLO official' as saying that the guerrillas were under written orders from Mr Abbas to carry out a suicide mission in Ashdod, and that they had changed their minds out of cowardice and decided to hijack the ship.

The (Tunis-based) PLF first officially confirmed responsibility for the operation in a communique published on Oct. 14. On the same day, Mr Khaled al Hassan said that the PLF would be punished for the action.

On Oct. 10, after the news of Mr Klinghoffer's death had been revealed, President Mubarak stated that *the hijackers* had left Egyptian territory, and were probably in the hands of the PLO. The PLO in Tunis denied that it was holding them, and said that they were still awaiting the arrival of the guerrillas, whom they intended to put on trial. Egyptian officials repeatedly denied that they had been aware of Mr Klinghoffer's death at the time of the hijackers' surrender.

On the same day, President Reagan responded to journalists' questions by stating that if the PLO 'can bring them the hijackers to justice and carry that out, all right...but just so long as they are brought to justice'. After several hours of speculation that the President had implicitly recognized the PLO, he gave a press conference in which he retracted the comment and instead called on the organization to hand the hijackers over to an appropriate sovereign state for trial.

An Egyptian Boeing-737 en route to Tunis, with the hijackers, Mr Abbas and another (unnamed) PLO official on board, was on the night of Oct. 10–11 intercepted by four US Navy F-14 fighter aircraft and forced to land at the Sigonella NATO air base in Sicily, Italy, where the Palestinians were taken into custody by the Italian authorities. Mr Abbas later flew on to Rome.

It was subsequently reported that, after the 737 had landed at the air base, Italian troops surrounded the aircraft, and were in turn surrounded by US special forces troops, who were believed to be acting under the orders of Mr Caspar Weinberger, the US Defence Secretary. Mr Weinberger was said to have asked Signor Giovanni Spadolini, his Italian counterpart, to hand over the hijackers and Mr Abbas to the US authorities. The Italian government refused this request, and the US troops were withdrawn on the orders of President Reagan. Mr Abbas flew to Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, on Oct. 12, when the Yugoslav authorities rejected a US request that he be arrested. The US administration subsequently publicly criticized the Italian decision to allow Mr Abbas to leave the country. [For the resignation of the Italian government over the question of Mr Abbas's release,

The US action in intercepting the Egyptian aircraft was praised by Israel and by the UK and criticized by many Arab states. It provoked further anti-American demonstrations throughout the Arab world see 34069 A.]

President Mubarak described it as an act of 'piracy', although some observers suggested that the Egyptian pilot had colluded with the interception. The Soviet official news agency Tass commented that while US anger at the death of Mr Klinghoffer was 'understandable' and 'just', it had shown 'double standards' in its act of interception.

President Reagan sent a message to President Mubarak on Oct. 13 in which he expressed 'deep regret that this action was necessary', adding that it was taken 'after most serious consideration and with reluctance'. As anti-US demonstrations continued in Cairo, President Mubarak the following day demanded a public apology from the USA, this demand being refused by President Reagan. In an attempt to heal the divisions between Egypt and the USA on this issue,

Mr John Whitehead, the Deputy Secretary of State, visited President Mubarak on Oct. 21 and expressed 'very much regret' that developments had taken the course that they did. Mr Whitehead travelled on to Tunisia for discussions with President Bourguiba and Tunisian leaders, during which he reportedly attempted to repair some of the damage in Tunisian-US relations resulting from the US administration's failure to condemn the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters.

The trial of the four hijackers, together with a Syrian alleged to be their accomplice, on charges of illegal possession of arms and explosives, took place in Genoa, Italy (the *Achille Lauro's* home port), on Nov. 18.

The five, who included Mr Mohammad Issa Abbas, a distant relative of Mr Mahmoud Abbas, were convicted and sentenced to between four and nine years' imprisonment. During the trial, the hijackers reportedly implicated Mr Mahmoud Abbas in the planning of the operation. The state prosecutor announced on Oct. 19 that a total of 16 people had been charged with further offences, including kidnapping and the murder of Mr Klinghoffer. The 16 included the five already convicted, another two who had been arrested following the hijacking, and nine others (reportedly including Mr Abbas) whose whereabouts were unknown.

#### Cancellation of meeting between UK government and PLO members

The planned meeting between Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Milhim and Bishop Khuri [see above] was cancelled by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on the morning of Oct. 14, several hours before it was due to take place. (The meeting between Sir Geoffrey on the one hand and Mr Majali and Mr Masri on the other went ahead as scheduled).

According to the FCO announcement of the cancellation, the PLO men had refused to sign a statement undertaking to search for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of UN security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 of 1973 (the latter reiterating the provisions of 242 and calling on all parties to commence negotiations 'aimed at establishing a just and durable peace—see page 26197). It was subsequently reported that Bishop Khuri had in fact agreed to this request, but that Mr Milhim had declined to do so. King Hussein held talks with FCO officials on Oct. 16, during what was described as a private visit to the UK, after which he said that the UK government had 'acted very honourably' throughout the episode. An FCO spokesman said that official contacts between Britain and the PLO could still be possible 'under the right conditions'.

#### Offer of 'territorial compromise' by Mr Peres-Arab and Israeli reaction

During the course of talks with President Reagan in Washington on Oct. 17 [see page 34009] Mr Peres said that he was ready to hold talks with Jordanian officials without preconditions, and that he would be willing to make 'territorial compromises' in the search for peace. In a speech to the UN General Assembly on Oct. 21 he said that Israel was willing to end the state of war with Jordan and to negotiate with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation within the framework of an international forum under the auspices of the UN security Council.

The speech was welcomed by the Egyptian representative at the UN as ‘a good start to keep the momentum going in the peace process’. In an interview with the *New York Times* published on Oct. 23, King Hussein welcomed the ‘spirit’ of Mr Peres's initiative, which he said ‘represents a beginning of movement in the right direction’, and he described Mr Peres as ‘a man of vision’.

At the close of talks between Mr Zaid Rifai, the Jordanian Prime Minister, and his Syrian counterpart, Dr Abdel Raouf al-Kasm, on Oct. 22, however, it had been agreed not to endorse any ‘partial and unilateral’ peace settlements. On the same day a Jordanian government spokesman had rejected direct talks with Israel as running counter to this stance.

Mr Peres's initiative was dismissed by a PLO spokesman on Oct. 22, while Mr David Levi, an Israeli Vice-Premier, said that Mr Peres had broken the *Likud-Alignment* coalition agreement (which called for the continuation of the ‘Camp David peace process’ and for the holding of elections ‘in the event of a disagreement over the territorial issue’—see page 33244). President Mubarak discussed Mr Peres's proposals with King Hussein on Oct. 24. On the same day the US Senate voted to block all proposed arms sales to Jordan until Jordan agreed to hold direct negotiations with Israel.

Mr Murphy was reported in late October to have held secret talks with King Hussein in an effort to find common ground between Israel and Jordan on the question of the proposed international peace conference. Mr Walter Cluverius, the senior US diplomat in Jerusalem (where the USA maintained a consulate, its embassy being sited in Tel Aviv), was at this time appointed special adviser to Mr Murphy to assist him in advancing the peace process.

A number of Western press reports claimed at this time that Mr Peres had held a clandestine meeting with King Hussein in Paris in early October, had urged the King to agree to direct negotiations on the basis of territorial compromise by Israel, and had suggested that, if Jordan agreed to this, Mr Peres could hold elections and subsequently form a government which would not need to rely on Likud support. Mr Peres denied that he had met with King Hussein, and described the press reports as ‘nonsense’.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on Oct. 29 quoted ‘highly reliable sources’ as stating that the government had drawn up plans for an Israeli-Jordanian condominium arrangement for the West Bank pending a final settlement. According to *Ha'aretz*, the plan, which had been approved by the US administration, provided for Palestinian autonomy and for joint patrols of the IDF and Jordanian Army in the Jordan Valley to prevent guerrilla infiltration. The IDF would, however, continue to be responsible for internal security in the West Bank. The right-wing *Tehiya* party (which was not part of the governing coalition) claimed on Oct. 31 that the *Ha'aretz* report was true. Other reports at this time suggested that the story was based on details of a working paper prepared for Mr Peres by Gen. Avraham Tarir, the director-general of the Prime Minister's office. Mr Peres repeatedly denied the existence of such plans.

Discussions involving Mr Arafat ‘Cairo declaration’ on limited armed struggle

Amid reports that King Hussein was considering a renunciation of the Jordanian-PLO accord in the light of the *Achille Lauro* hijack and of the failure of the scheduled UK meeting [see above],

Mr Arafat visited Amman, accompanied by senior PLO officials, for talks on Oct. 28–29. It was announced at the end of the talks that they had agreed to the establishment of a permanent joint committee of Jordanian and Palestinian officials to co-ordinate peace initiatives. Unconfirmed reports suggested that Mr Arafat had also promised King Hussein that he would not sanction any armed operations outside Israeli-controlled territory.

Mr Arafat visited Egypt on Nov. 5–11 for talks with President Mubarak and other Egyptian leaders. Mr Osama al-Baz, the director of the presidential office for foreign affairs, stated in an interview on Nov. 5 that he would advise Mr Arafat to renounce all operations outside the Israeli-occupied territories.

On Nov. 7, in a statement which became known as the ‘Cairo declaration’, Mr Arafat said he was ‘opposed to all forms of terrorism’, and cited a declaration by the PLO in 1974 which ‘condemn[ed] all outside operations’. He promised that any PLO member who undertook such operations would be punished. Mr Arafat insisted, however, that the armed struggle would continue in territory occupied by Israel.

Since the PLO had repeatedly refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, this was seen as an affirmation that guerrilla operations would continue in Israel itself as well as the occupied territories, this interpretation being confirmed subsequently by both Mr Arafat and Mr Khalaf. On Nov. 11, however, President Mubarak said that his understanding of the ‘Cairo declaration’ was that the armed struggle would be limited to the West Bank and Gaza strip.

King Hussein welcomed Mr Arafat's statement as a ‘positive step’ and said that he hoped that the PLO leader would ‘at an appropriate time’ renounce all violence, declare his acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338, his recognition of Israel's right to exist and his willingness to negotiate with it at an international conference.

Mr Mubarak announced on Nov. 13 that he had sent a ‘peace plan’ to President Reagan and Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, for consideration by them at their Geneva summit conference on Nov. 19–20. The plan was based on the proposals for an international conference and demanded recognition of ‘the legitimate role of the PLO’.

A joint meeting of the *Fatah* central committee and the PLO executive committee, held in Baghdad (Iraq) on Nov. 21, rejected Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for settlement. After further joint meetings, the central council of the PNC convened in camera in Baghdad on Nov. 24. During a meeting with Mr Murphy on Nov. 23, President Mubarak commented that a change of stance by the PLO towards the resolutions would be helpful in advancing the peace process.

In a televised interview with French journalists on Nov. 25, King Hassan of Morocco revealed that Mr Peres had requested a meeting with him in his capacity as current chairman of the Arab League. King Hassan said that he would receive Mr Peres ‘with great pleasure’ as long as the latter had ‘some serious proposal to make’.—(International Herald Tribune-Times-Le Monde-Guardian-Financial Times-BBC Summary of World Broadcasts Jerusalem Post-UN Information Office, London Observer)

Prev. rep. 33492 A

© 1931- 2010 Keesing's Worldwide, LLC - All Rights Reserved.