

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/32/13
Creation Date(s):	25 March 1981
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
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Embassy of Ireland
Jerusalem
25 March 1981

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin

PR 3/81 (Israel)

Meeting with Mr. David Kimche, Sec Gen of Israeli FO

1. Accompanied by Mr. N. Holohan (who drafted this report) I called on Mr. D. Kimche the new FO SecGen on 24 March. Present also was Mr. Y. Eldan of the Europe II desk. The meeting was conducted in a very cordial atmosphere. Mr. Kimche gave the impression of being a man of - by Israeli standards - moderate views and of being well disposed towards Ireland.
2. After the preliminaries the SecGen remarked that he had been present the previous day at the meeting between the Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eitan and the UNIFIL Force Commander, Major Gen. Wm. Callaghan. He said that the encounter had gone very well and that he felt that the "chemistry" between the two men was such that they were likely to get on well together. He stressed the genuine desire on the Israeli side to cooperate fully with the UNIFIL operation and said that agreement had been given to Gen. Callaghan's requests for overflight rights for UN aircraft on the Israeli border and a bypass road for Israeli vehicles at Naqoura. Gen. Eitan promised to have a retraction issued to remarks attributed to Gen. Callaghan which were untrue about Gen. Eskine's command of UNIFIL. He also *agreed to* arrange a private meeting between himself, Gen. Callaghan and Gen. Ben-Gal of IDF Northern Command. Turning to the situation in Southern Lebanon, Mr. Kimche said he was pleased that Irish batt had had no major difficulties with Major Haddad's militia since last May. He added that since then it was the PLO which had been causing most of the trouble and only the previous week they had been causing most of the trouble and only the previous week they had once again shelled without provocation Major Haddad's headquarters at Marjayoun. He said that Haddad was not a puppet but that nevertheless Israel was making every effort to keep him in check and that, without such a restraining influence, the situation would probably be much worse. I said I was glad of this assurance but pointed out that there was daily harrassment of the Irish contingent of the DFF. I was also glad of his presence at the above meeting which indicated a return to FO control.
3. At Mr. Kimche's request, I outlined at some length the current situation in Northern Ireland and the prospects for the direct negotiations now underway between Dublin and London. I suggested that there might be some lessons to be learnt by Israel from the Irish historical experience arising from the acquisition of territory by force and the symptom of second class citizenship, both or either of which whenever present were the main political causes of tension.

4. Mr. Kimche replied that while there were about 700,000 Arabs who were citizens of Israel, they were not deprived of employment opportunities and were in general considerably more prosperous than their fellow-Arabs in the surrounding countries. Indeed the Gaza strip, although not a part of Israel proper, had been transformed since 1967 by being associated with the Israeli economy. He said that it was only the activities of the PLO which prevented the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories from cooperating with the current peace process. Israeli intelligence had ascertained that the ordinary Palestinians on the West Bank were ready to accept the autonomy proposals but were intimidated by the threat of retaliation by PLO murder-gangs of this were said openly. It was with great sorrow, accordingly, that Israel saw its European friends, including Ireland, giving encouragement to that organisation. He personally had a soft spot for Ireland because of the mutual struggle against British imperialism. To the founders of the State of Israel, the (Old) IRA were heroes and Ireland provided an example to be followed.

5. I said that we were told the same thing by Arab representatives. Our attitude towards the PLO was based on the belief that it was representative of a considerable body of opinion among the Palestinian people and no alternative representatives appeared to be available. Despite press reports to the contrary, however, Ireland had not agreed to grant official approval to a PLO office should it be opened in Dublin. With regard to alleged contacts between the PLO and the IRA, thorough checks had been made with the Irish police and the authorities in Lebanon but no evidence whatsoever for such links could be found. Such articles as that written in the Daily Telegraph on 1 December 1980 by Robert Moss - a journalist who had a reputation of being most unreliable - and wild statements emanating from Israeli official sources, could be extremely damaging to Ireland's relations with both Israel and Britain. Any evidence of such links should be passed on to us promptly. I furnished him with a paper on the subject.

6. Mr. Kimche then raised the possibility that Ireland might vote in favour of PLO participation in Security Council debates. He said that this would give support to a grave infringement of the Security Council's rules of procedure and hoped that a change of heart might yet be possible.

7. On the question of bilateral Irish-Israeli relations, he hoped that these could be improved in the future through more cultural and economic exchanges and by an increase in Ministerial visits. He thought it was particularly unfortunate that there was still no exchange of resident Ambassadors.

8. As regards the Ten initiative on the Middle East, he felt that if the reports which had appeared in the press concerning the details of the Luxembourg document were accurate, there was not the slightest chance that Israel could cooperate in any way. He nevertheless felt that Europe could make a very positive contribution to the peace process initiated at Camp David.

9. In reply to questions, Mr Kimche restated the well-known Israeli positions on several key issues. He stressed that the two West Bank mayors has been expelled solely because they had been guilty of incitement to violence. Self-determination could not be applied to the West Bank and Gaza because the result would be detrimental to the vital security interests of Israel. There could be no possibility of the establishment of a new State on the West Bank since a Palestinian State - i.e. Jordan - already exists. Israel would continue its policy of refusing to talk to the PLO since the latter was intent on the destruction of the Jewish State. They would, however, only talk to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza even if they were elected PLO supporters. The refugees who had fled from Palestine in 1948 were not entitled to compensation since Israel had accepted an equal number of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Finally, Mr Kimche felt that the new U.S. Administration would stick firmly with the Camp David process particularly in view of President Reagan's strong interest in maintaining Israel's position as a military power in the region.

Sean G. Ronan
Ambassador