

# Nations Seek Way To Free Hostages

## Red Cross, Guerrillas Negotiate

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Nearly 200 passengers and crew were kept hostage last night aboard two hijacked jet airliners parked in the Jordanian desert as American, British, West German, Swiss and Israeli leaders sought to effect their safe release without further inflaming the Middle East crisis.

The International Red Cross was acting as go-between with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which pulled off the audacious hijackings of three planes Sunday and failed in a fourth.

There was no agreement as of last night as the various governments sought a common front for negotiations.

The Popular Front has set a deadline of 4 a.m. Thursday in Jordan (10 p.m. EDT Wednesday), with the implication that the planes, already wired for destruction, will be blown up if the exchange deal they demand is not completed. One Front spokesman said that in such a case the hostages would be taken to a Front camp.

Although many details remained unclear, what the Front was demanding appeared to be this:

- A swap of seven Palestine guerrillas now held in Britain

Switzerland and West Germany for freedom of American, British, Swiss, German and passengers of other nationalities and the planes, a Swissair DC-8 and a TWA 707

- A separate deal with Israel in which Israeli passengers and some passengers the Front contends have dual Israeli-American citizenship would be exchanged for the freedom of two Algerians and an uncertain number of a claimed 3,000 Palestinians held in Israel.

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A Popular Front spokesman said, according to an Amman statement broadcast from Damascus, Syria, that "none of the Israelis, whether men or women, will be released . . . until they are exchanged for fedayeen detained in Israeli prisons."

#### United Policy

U.S. and other Western leaders yesterday took a personal hand in the effort to forge a united policy that would bring release of the hostages, but their most difficult task was how to win freedom for the Israelis involved.

The Swiss government had indicated on Monday that it would release three guerrillas held in its jails in exchange for the Swissair plane and all its passengers. But yesterday the government said it would not make a swap until all passengers and crews of both planes were freed.

The West German government said it would release the three guerrillas it held in exchange for all West German hostages.

The British, however, de-

murred at releasing Leila Khaled, the 24-year-old Palestinian who failed in Sunday's attempt to hijack an Israeli jet over England. No formal charges have been made against her. The body of her unnamed companion, killed in the unsuccessful hijack attempt, also was demanded in the swap by the Popular Front.

While the hijackers made no direct connection between their ransom demands and the Arab-Israeli and internal-Arab conflicts, the ties between the two were recognized as "something more than incidental," as an American official put it.

Success for the Front would increase the stature of that far-left group among the Palestinians, further reduce the authority of Jordan's King Hussein in his own country and make even more distant the possibility of a Middle East peace growing out of the American diplomatic initiative. The Front is a bitter opponent of that initiative.

Furthermore, there was danger that release of the non-Israeli passengers and crew, leaving behind the Israelis, would further exacerbate the already difficult relationship between Washington and Jerusalem.

#### Plane Uncomfortable

The men, women and children who sat aboard the two planes in simmering heat yesterday or who were in two Amman hotels or in hospitals were the victims of this new turn in the international politics of the Middle East.

One woman passenger who was permitted to talk briefly to a United Press International reporter said that "it gets unbearably hot in the plane during the day."

A Swissair steward was quoted by the Associated Press as saying that "we have food but we have no water at the moment. We have asked for water. Toilet and hygiene conditions are very bad."

The Front released 120 non-Israeli women and children Monday with some "old men" included, its spokesman said. They were sent to two hotels in Amman, some 40 miles away. Those at the Intercontinental Hotel later had to duck under beds for safety as mortar shells shattered window glass. The shells were apparently fired during a fight between guerrillas and Jordanian army troops.

The American embassy in Amman reported 73 Americans, 20 Indians, 14 Swiss and seven Germans were at the Intercontinental. Another group was at the Philadelphia Hotel.

#### Women Still Aboard

The Front's spokesman, unnamed, said that "only British, Swiss, U.S. and West German males are still under detention" in the planes, surrounded by armed guards. But an American schoolboy who reached Amman said that there were still about 14 women and children, presumably Israeli, still aboard.

Reuters said two American women passengers who also reached Amman said they believed the passengers included 48 Israelis and 12 persons holding both American and Israeli nationality. The concept of dual nationality is a complex one, especially for American citizens.

Cries of outrage abounded. In Bonn, West German Foreign Minister Walter Scheel declared that "such a brutalization of international custom cannot be accepted." In London, British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home called in Arab diplomats to express "grave concern at this outrage."

Some Arab voices indicated concern. In Cairo, the authoritative newspaper Al Ahram said that "one of the main goals of the battle (with Israel) is to gain world public opinion on the side of the Palestinian struggle and not to lose it. It is evident that the attack on international civil aviation does not encourage world feeling of solidarity with the Palestinian cause. On the contrary, it incites a feeling of criticism in the ordinary man."

Al Ahram added that in the Vietnamese war "at no time did the Vietnamese fighters use the hijacking of civilian aircraft as one of their methods . . ."

In Israel, officials were

alarmed that the Western nations might make a deal with the Palestinians that failed to include their citizens. The Israelis were especially incensed over reports the terrorists were separating passengers not only according to nationality but also by religion.

In Moscow yesterday there was total silence about the hijackings.

#### Washington Emphasis

In Washington the emphasis was on winning a common approach by all the governments, though there was ambiguity in official statements about the Israeli role. The "paramount objective," said State Department spokesman

Robert J. McCloskey, was the early release of the hostages.

He said that about 70 Americans from the TWA plane and 10 from the Swissair jet were at the Amman hotels while about 15 Americans were still aboard the Swissair plane and an unknown number on the TWA jet.

The presence at White House and State Department meetings yesterday of Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird raised the question of whether any military move might be taken. That seemed unlikely, but contingency planning for all sorts of possibilities is the normal procedure when Americans are held captive overseas.

The International Red Cross mission to Jordan to deal with the hijackers was headed by Andre Rochet, who was an intermediary after the recent hijacking to Cairo of a Greek airliner.

United Press International said that sources at Red Cross headquarters in Geneva said the organization was most concerned by the guerrilla demand for release by Israel of all its Arab prisoners. The officials said the Israelis had indicated they want no part of an exchange on such a basis.

In Israel one newspaper cepting the exchange deal will commented that "haste in aconly increase the terrorists' daring and award a prize for their audacity."

dicated American-British-Swiss-West German agreement on a unified approach. Most critical was the problem of what joint policy to adopt, given the dual desire to free the hostages as quickly as possible but not to do so in a way that enhanced the left-wing Popular Front and thus make even more difficult a Middle East peace.



Associated Press

**Passengers on a Sabena flight from Brussels to Tel Aviv are frisked by police.**