

2 HIJACKED ISRAELIS RELEASED BY SYRIA

NEW YORK (WNS) ---- The two Israelis held in Damascus on a hijacked TWA AIRLINER since August 29 were released along with the repaired airliner and flown to Athens, then left there for Tel Aviv on a regular Athens to Israel TWA flight, officials of the airline reported here.

TWA said that it had worked with many governments and organizations in efforts to effect the release of Prof. Shlomo Sameloff and Salah Muallem. In making the announcement, TWA president F. C. Weiser, said TWA was

"particularly grateful to the International Red Cross whose untiring efforts have been instrumental in securing the release of the two passengers. We have also worked continuously with many international organizations and governments to whom we express our deepest gratitude. They include the United States State Department, the Government of Syria, the Government of Italy and its Embassy in Damascus, the Government of Israel, the many Jewish organizations within the United States, the Secretary-

General of the United Nations and the International Air Transport Association. The TWA statement also said that "of necessity," its efforts for the two Israelis "had to be conducted in secrecy. Out dealings were further complicated by the fact that we do not serve Syria, have never been authorized to serve Syria and the United States does not maintain a diplomatic relationship with that country." Mr. Weiser reported that the company "also kept the Israel Government informed about our activities." He appealed for support for international legislation and public opinion to "put an end to hijacking and air piracy" and thus to "make the skies free for everyone."

The release of the two men was part of a larger deal involving Israel, Syria and Egypt which saw Damascus free the two passenger for 13 Syrians while Cairo returned two Israeli pilots for 58 Egyptians.

Israeli Premier Golda Meir denounced Syria and Egypt and the need to have civilians victims of aerial hijacking involved in prisoner-of-war exchanges. She said the civilized nations would not have made such an exchange necessary. Other Israeli leaders were especially bitter toward Syria and indicated that Jerusalem had a score to settle with Damascus.

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