

NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Clinton administration lobbied Democratic senators not to sign on to legislation that would force the relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole officially introduced his legislation on the Senate floor. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich told members of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that he would introduce similar legislation in the House. [Page 2]

■ Jordan officially protested Israel's plans to confiscate roughly 140 acres of land in eastern Jerusalem. At the same time, the U.N. Security Council slated discussions on the matter for Thursday, in response to calls by Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. [Page 4]

■ The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations sent accused Nazi murderer Helmut Oberlander, a Canadian citizen, back to Canada, where he will face citizenship revocation proceedings based on charges that he took part in executions of civilians. Oberlander, 71, was a decorated member of a mobile killing unit, according to the Justice Department.

■ The Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution rejecting discrimination against female rabbis in the Conservative movement. Passed 10 years after the movement ordained its first woman rabbi, the resolution acknowledged discrimination against women in their congregational jobs, including less pay for the same work.

■ Israel and Jordan postponed initialing a draft trade accord, at the Hashemite kingdom's request. Three other agreements were signed. [Page 3]

■ Swiss banks confirmed that money deposited there by Jews who later perished in the Holocaust was donated to voluntary organizations. When no one claimed the deposits, they were given to groups such as the Red Cross. [Page 4]

■ The Iranian-backed Hezbollah fundamentalist group said two of its fighters were killed in clashes with South Lebanon Army forces during an attack in the southern Lebanon security zone.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Jews born in Berlin return to city that betrayed them**

By Ruth E. Gruber

BERLIN, May 9 (JTA) — For Germany's Jews, the shadow of the Holocaust loomed over this week's commemorative events marking the 50th anniversary of the Allied defeat of Nazi Germany, but the occasion also served to promote reconciliation and revival.

Jews from around the world participated in ceremonies that included the opening of a new Jewish museum and cultural center in Berlin's partially restored New Synagogue; memorial services; commemorative meetings; and the groundbreaking for a new museum about Gestapo terror.

U.S. Vice President Al Gore, British Prime Minister John Major, outgoing French President Francois Mitterrand and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin — representing the four nations that united to defeat the Third Reich — were on hand for the ceremonies commemorating the May 8, 1945, victory in the war in Europe.

Some 400 Berlin-born Jews who fled Nazi persecution and now live in countries around the world attended the ceremonies in their native city at the invitation of Berlin authorities.

The group included the 30,000th former Berlin Jew to return at the invitation of the city. Berlin authorities began inviting Berlin-born Jews back to the city in 1969.

Repentance, reconciliation and hopes for a better future were recurrent themes at the ceremonies.

But the attempted firebombing early Sunday of a synagogue in the northern German city of Lubeck, which 14 months ago was damaged by a firebomb set by neo-Nazis, cast a long, angry shadow on the events.

"Unfortunately, when I read the news I get the feeling that people have hardly learned anything," Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, told a German television station.

Early Sunday morning, arsonists set fire to a shed attached to the synagogue in Lubeck, located on the Baltic coast, and an unexploded firebomb was found in the building.

Firefighters prevented serious damage, but the incident — similar to last year's attack — provoked anger and embarrassment, particularly at a time when the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and Nazi barbarity have been at the heart of German public and private debate.

Citizens in Lubeck placed flowers against the wall of the synagogue, and 3,000 people staged a protest against the attack.

Heide Simonis, the governor of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, where Lubeck is located, said the perpetrators of the attack "must be mentally deranged."

Newspaper editorials as well as Jewish and non-Jewish commentators condemned the attack, which authorities said appeared to be deliberately timed to coincide with V-E Day commemorations.

On Monday, authorities posted a \$73,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators, who are suspected to be neo-Nazis.

Synagogue rededication reflects revival of Jewish life

On Sunday evening, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, President Roman Herzog, Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen and numerous political and religious leaders and diplomats joined Jewish leaders and hundreds of Jews at a rain-soaked, open-air ceremony dedicating the new Jewish Museum and culture center in the reconstructed New Synagogue.

"This is a sign of the re-establishment of Jewish life in Germany and Berlin," Bubis told the audience during the ceremony, which was televised live nationwide.

The New Synagogue, built in 1866, was once Berlin's largest and most ornate Jewish house of worship.

It seated 3,200 people, and its 1,650-foot-high dome, glittering with gilded buttresses, dominated the city center.

It was set on fire during Kristallnacht, the pogrom of Nov. 9-10, 1938.

But the New Synagogue was saved from destruction by the head of

the local police precinct, Wilhelm Krutzfeld, a non-Jew who ordered the fires to be extinguished.

A 24-member delegation of Jewish New York City policemen — members of a Jewish police association called the Shomrim Society — took part in the rededication ceremony, where they paid tribute to Krutzfeld's deed.

Although it survived Kristallnacht, the New Synagogue was severely damaged during an Allied bombing raid in 1943.

Reconstruction of these ruins took seven years. The restoration included work on the huge golden dome and the creation of the museum, which concentrates on the centuries-long history of Jews in pre-Holocaust Berlin.

But the bulk of the synagogue remains a memory — an empty space behind the reconstructed section.

"The reconstruction of the synagogue and opening of the museum is a very big signal of an attitude that points in the right direction," Norma Drimmer, a leader of the Berlin Jewish community, said in an interview.

Some 160,000 Jews lived in Berlin when the Nazis took control in 1933. Only a few thousand remained at the war's end. Today, the Berlin community numbers more than 10,000, including many immigrants from the former Soviet Union. About 43,000 Jews live in Germany.

'All Germans share responsibility'

On Monday, Berlin officials began ceremonies on the actual anniversary of V-E Day with a groundbreaking ceremony for another museum — on the site where the former Gestapo and SS headquarters once stood.

The new building will be the seat of the Topography of Terror Foundation and will include documentation and exhibits about Nazi terror.

"We cannot be permitted to suppress and forget the horrors of the Nazis, the nadir of German history," Berlin Mayor Diepgen said at a ceremony at the Berlin Senate hall. "All Germans, even those born after the war, share responsibility."

Bubis told the gathering that the experience of history shows that people learn slowly and forget quickly.

"A museum here will help show future generations where terror can lead," he said.

At a luncheon later Monday, Berlin Senate member Ulrich Krueger thanked 400 Berlin-born Jews for accepting the city's invitation to return to Berlin for the commemoration.

Some of the guests were making their first trip back since they fled Berlin in the 1930s.

Krueger thanked them for overcoming their fear of returning to "the place where you had the best of your life and the worst of your life."

"I face you with fear," he said. "Looking into your eyes, I see that you were and are our brother Abel, and we were Cain. Thank you for coming."

"Go back and tell your children that there are many people who feel deeply ashamed about what happened here and want it never to be forgotten, and pledge that it will never happen again."

"Please forgive us for what we did to you and your families."

The 400 former Berlin Jews, some of whom brought their children, appeared to have a positive view of their return to Berlin and of developments in Germany since the war. But they stressed that what the Nazis did must not be forgotten and that vigilance must be retained.

"It was nice to be here and see that the Jewish people are finding a place here, but I myself would not live here," Lily Zucker of Miami said in an interview.

She was making her first trip back to Berlin since she fled in 1938, and she said it was an emotional return.

"I am one who cannot forgive or forget," she said.

Kurt Olden, who is from New York, was more positive. "I think Germany has made great progress in democracy," he said.

"I can't feel at home here," said Max Flesch, who left Berlin in 1933 for Tel Aviv. "My parents, my family, were deported. I feel very strange here, but for the future, we have to have peace between our people." □

Opposed to embassy move, NSC lobbies Senate Democrats

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, May 9 (JTA) — The Clinton administration has launched a full-court press to keep Democratic senators from signing on to a move to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The National Security Council began lobbying senators this week in an effort to kill legislation that would force the State Department to begin building the embassy before the end of 1996.

The ambassador would move in no later than May 31, 1999, according to the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Implementation Act of 1995, which was introduced Tuesday by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) and Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.).

A one-page list of talking points prepared for Anthony Lake, President Clinton's national security adviser, said this legislation "will have a devastating impact on the peace process."

"It would likely lead to a breakdown of the negotiations and half the gains on normalization that Israel has been making in the Arab world," it also said.

The legislation, while supported by many Jewish groups, has also generated concern among Israeli officials and peace activists. The concerns center on the timing of such a move.

NSC prepared the arguments, known as "talkers," for conversations with Sens. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), according to a copy obtained by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. The effort failed to stop Inouye from co-sponsoring the measure.

In addition to Dole, Kyl and Inouye, other co-sponsors include Sens. Hank Brown (R-Colo.), Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.)

"We'd be hurting Israel," the talkers said. "We need your support to ensure that we aren't faced with legislation on Jerusalem that undermines our efforts and, frankly, puts us out of business as a facilitator in moving the parties forward."

In a meeting with Dole Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to endorse the legislation but did not tell Dole that the move would hurt Israel, as the NSC claims.

"We are not going to be involved in domestic discussions," Rabin told Dole, according to congressional aides.

"We welcome recognition of the fact that Jerusalem is our capital and we will welcome embassies that will come," Rabin reportedly told Dole.

In response, Kyl accused the NSC of illegally lobbying Congress. "They will not be able to keep people from signing this bill," Kyl said in a brief interview off the Senate floor.

The Arizona senator, who has been in the forefront of the drive to move the embassy, called on the administration to tone down its rhetoric opposing the legislation.

"When the administration speaks, especially the NSC, it gives opponents of Israel more credibility," the senator said. "This is not especially helpful." □

Rabin and Clinton renew vows to pursue peace course

By Lisa Hostein

WASHINGTON, May 9 (JTA) — President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared their mutual admiration for each other and their respective efforts to pursue peace in the Middle East this week.

Making a joint appearance at the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on Sunday night, the two leaders vowed to more than 2,000 pro-Israel activists here to push forward with their quest for peace.

Their appearance followed a meeting earlier the same evening between the president and prime minister at the White House.

The meeting, which lasted about an hour, focused primarily on the stalled Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations and efforts to contain Iran, according to Israeli and U.S. officials.

In a briefing with reporters Sunday night, the prime minister said he told the president that the question of security arrangements is key to reaching an agreement with Syria.

He said Israel and Syria had not yet reached any agreement about borders.

Rabin said he hoped an upcoming visit to Washington by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, scheduled for mid-May, would lead to a resumption in talks on security issues between Israeli and Syrian military officials. Talks between the two nations' ambassadors to Washington have been proceeding sporadically during the past few months.

But, Rabin added, he is not holding his breath.

Some in the Arab world outraged

Concerning Syria, he said, "I've learned that until it happens, it hasn't happened yet."

Rabin said the issue of Israeli land expropriation in eastern Jerusalem did not come up in his meeting with Clinton.

The administration has expressed concern over Israel's decision to confiscate about 140 acres of land, a decision that has also sparked outrage in the Arab world.

Rabin and Clinton also did not discuss the question of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, Rabin said, an issue that has returned to the fore in the wake of congressional efforts to push the administration to begin such a process.

Both leaders also avoided the Jerusalem-related issues in their speeches at the AIPAC conference, though Rabin did allude often to Jerusalem, reiterating Israel's longstanding policy that "Jerusalem is united under Israel's sovereignty, the capital of Israel and the heart of the Jewish people forever."

Clinton's lack of reference to Jerusalem was noted by several observers, especially since his administration has, in the past, expressed support for Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel.

However, the administration has said the status of Jerusalem should be left to final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, scheduled to begin next year.

The president, who has been making numerous appearances at Jewish gatherings in recent weeks, instead focused his remarks on Rabin's peacemaking efforts, his own trip to Russia and his administration's commitment to foreign aid.

Praising the prime minister for having a "level of fortitude and vision most people in any elected democracy cannot muster," Clinton urged the audience to "stand with

this brave man in his attempts to make peace." Listing a series of recent weapons sales and transfers to the Jewish state, Clinton vowed to "minimize those risks" Israel may be required to take for peace.

In that context, Clinton pledged that "in any agreement Israel concludes with Syria, it will have the means to defend itself by itself."

The president also enlisted American Jews to lobby for foreign aid, saying Israel would be "the first to be affected" by proposed cuts in foreign policy spending.

Even if those cuts did not affect direct U.S. economic assistance to Israel, Clinton said, other reductions would "threaten our efforts to help Israel reach a lasting peace with its neighbors."

"If we renege on our commitments to Egypt, to Jordan, to the Palestinians, we will never convince anybody else that we will stand behind our commitments," the president said.

He added that "two of my proudest moments as president" came at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian accords in Washington and the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in the Arava, on the border between the two countries.

Rabin, in his remarks, praised the president for his "leadership and inspiration and America's contribution to the peace process."

Rabin vowed to continue his quest for peace but warned that the "Islamic world backed by Iran is the greatest danger to stability, tranquility and peace in the Middle East."

On Monday, Rabin met with congressional leaders, with whom he emphasized the threat from Iran. He also lobbied for foreign aid in general and for Israel and its peace partners in particular.

Before flying home Monday night, Rabin stopped in New Jersey to visit the family of Alisa Flatow, the Brandeis University student killed during a terrorist attack in Gaza last month.

Expressing gratitude for her parents' decision to donate their daughter's organs in Israel, Rabin said Sunday night that when he conveys his condolences, "I will think how much Alisa Flatow symbolizes the connection between you, the American Jewish community, and Israel."

"Today her heart beats in Jerusalem," the prime minister said. □

Jordan, Israel pen 3 pacts, but put trade accord aside

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) — At Jordan's request, Israel and the Hashemite kingdom have put off initialing a draft trade accord.

The accord was to be signed Monday, the same day that the two countries signed three other draft agreements.

The agreements call for cooperation in agriculture, energy and the environment.

Jordanian Trade Minister Ali Abu El-Ragheb said issues remained to be resolved before a final trade agreement could be signed. The draft proposes that after three years, the two countries start negotiations for a free-trade accord.

Israel's ambassador to Jordan, Shimon Shamir, and the heads of the peace treaty follow-up committee, were at the signing ceremony of the three other agreements in Tiberias.

They called for continued cooperation between the two countries, and completion of negotiations for agreements in the areas of health, transportation and law enforcement. □

Jordan protests confiscations as U.N. slates council session

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) — Amid ongoing controversy surrounding Israeli plans to confiscate roughly 140 acres of land in eastern Jerusalem, Jordan has warned that the move could have a grave impact on relations between the two countries.

And on Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council slated discussions on the matter, in response to calls by Morocco and the United Arab Emirates, according to an Israeli official.

Jordanian officials confirmed Tuesday that their recently appointed ambassador to Israel, Marwan Muashar, met with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin a day earlier to convey the protest.

King Hassan II of Morocco sent a similar message to Israel, calling the land confiscations a "bombshell" that could have "serious repercussions" on the Middle East peace process.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, has said she opposes any Security Council action, according to the Israeli official.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials tried to dispel the growing pressure from Arab leaders.

"Development in Israel can't be stopped," said Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gad Ya'acobi, adding that the development is intended to benefit both Jews and Arabs.

In Jordan, Israel's ambassador Shimon Shamir told Israel Radio on Tuesday that the warning from Jordan did not reflect a crisis in relations between the two countries, but rather a difference of opinion.

He said the Jordanian warning should not be ignored, but that it should not be blown out of proportion.

Meanwhile, residents of Beit Safafa, one of the eastern Jerusalem communities whose land was slated for expropriation, protested the Israeli government's plans on Tuesday. "We are surrounded from all directions by big settlements," a resident told Israel Radio. "We in Beit Safafa want to live in homes surrounded by nature, not by a jungle of cement and asphalt." □

Swiss banks: Donations made from Shoah victims' accounts

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) — The association of banks in Switzerland has confirmed that money deposited there by Jews who later perished in the Holocaust has been donated to voluntary organizations, Israel Radio reported.

When no one claimed the deposits, which may have totaled tens of millions of dollars, they were given to groups such as the Red Cross, which received a \$40 million donation eight years ago from the bank U.B.S.

Now, Jewish organizations say a portion of that donation belongs to those who died in the Shoah.

"It is hard to tell exactly how much money was left in the accounts," said Noah Flug, secretary of the World Jewish Retribution Organization, a group that works to recover assets of those killed in the Holocaust. "There were numbered accounts, safe-deposit boxes, jewelry."

The total sum in the accounts of the Holocaust victims who had no family or information could be in the "tens of millions" of dollars, Flug said.

Flug said organizations must approach the Swiss government and banks to find a solution.

"Fifty years after the war, many states are trying to arrange compensation for Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. This should be done here, too."

In response to the issue, Likud Knesset member Avraham Herschson said he would submit an urgent proposal to the Knesset, calling on the government to take the matter into its own hands.

Dan Tichon, also of Likud, said he tried to raise the issue several years ago. The Foreign Ministry refused to deal with it out of concern that it would mar relations with Switzerland, he said. □

Head of French Jews pleased with election of Jacques Chirac

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 9 (JTA) — The head of the French Jewish community expressed satisfaction over this week's election of Jacques Chirac as president of France's Fifth Republic.

Conservative Chirac, 63, was chosen by 52.7 percent of the voters in Sunday's second round of national elections. His opponent, Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, won 47.3 percent of the votes.

In spite of the heated campaign, close to 20 percent of the French electorate abstained, an unusually high number for a presidential election in France.

Chirac, currently the mayor of Paris, will be inaugurated in the coming days for his seven-year term as president. He replaces outgoing Socialist President Francois Mitterrand, who will step down after 14 years in office.

For Jean Kahn, the president of CRIF, the body representing French Jewry's secular organizations, Chirac's election came as a relief. "Jacques Chirac has been leading for many years the struggle against all forms of intolerance," said Kahn, who also serves as president of the European Jewish Congress.

Kahn, speaking about the election results in an interview, noted that Chirac and France's Jewish community shared at least one point in common: a distaste for Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the extreme right-wing National Front.

Le Pen, who has been known to make anti-Semitic statements and campaigned on an anti-immigrant platform, received a surprising 15 percent of the vote last month in the first round of the presidential elections.

"Chirac has always stated his opposition to any alliance with Le Pen's National Front," Kahn said. "I hope he will stick to this position."

Although Le Pen has claimed that he is not anti-Semitic, he has made frequent statements in the past denying that the Holocaust took place. Last week, a Moroccan was deliberately drowned in the Seine by skinheads during a rally of Le Pen's National Front.

After the first round of elections in late April, Le Pen declared that "Chirac is worse than Jospin," though he later refused to give his backing to Jospin.

"Le Pen has some reasons to say that Chirac is ten times worse than Jospin," said Kahn, who noted that Chirac is against the idea of proportional elections to the French National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament. Members of the Assembly are currently chosen in direct elections, with a runoff held if no candidate wins a majority.

Proportional elections, which are favored by Jospin, "would have meant the presence in the next Assembly of over 100 representatives of the National Front," out of 600 parliamentarians, Kahn said.

"This would have been a catastrophe, because it would have permanently installed on the French political scene a party calling for the exclusion of certain categories of people. Had Jospin been elected, I would have feared a development of the National Front," Kahn said. "This risk is minor now with Chirac as president." □