



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Jewish groups geared up to oppose immigration reform proposals that would slash the number of refugees and immigrants allowed into the United States. Congress will be debating various proposals in the coming weeks. [Page 1]

■ Israeli and Palestinian negotiators announced a breakthrough in their talks on extending Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank. In an Israeli concession, the parties agreed to transfer more than 30 spheres of local government in the West Bank. [Page 4]

■ President Clinton telephoned Syrian President Hafez Assad in an effort to accelerate Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations prior to a visit to the region later this week by Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Appearing on CNN, the president voiced optimism that the two sides could reach a deal before the end of the year. [Page 2]

■ A Danish court agreed to extradite American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck to Germany. The court ruled that Lauck's written and verbal attacks on Jews violated Danish anti-racism laws, allowing for the extradition. If the extradition occurs, Lauck will face charges of smuggling banned hate literature into Germany for two decades. [Page 3]

■ Israeli air force jets attacked Hezbollah positions north of the security zone. The clashes followed the bombing assassination of Lufti Bazi, a Lebanese American who owned a phone service linking southern Lebanon with the rest of the world. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the bombing, saying he was an Israeli agent.

■ The assistant U.S. attorney in Los Angeles said he would decide next week whether to seek indictments against a respected Chasidic rabbi and his assistant, both of whom have been charged with sexually abusing a 15-year-old girl during an overnight flight from Australia to Los Angeles. The accused are Rabbi Israel Grunwald of Brooklyn, a leader of the Hungarian Pupa Hasidim, and his assistant, Yehudah Friedlander.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Immigration proposals spur opposition by Jewish activists

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, June 6 (JTA) — Proposals to slash America's refugee program and close the borders to hundreds of thousands more immigrants would "eviscerate" the program for refugees from the former Soviet Union, according to at least one Jewish activist.

A plan currently being considered by the Senate would cut the total number of refugees allowed in the United States each year from about 110,000 to 50,000.

This year, about 25,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union are expected to come to America under the program.

Jewish activists fear that if the government cuts the total number of refugees allowed in the United States, part of that effort would result in slashing the number of Jewish refugees allowed into the country.

"If adopted, this would, in effect, eviscerate our program" for Jews from the former Soviet Union, said Diana Aviv, Washington director of the Council of Jewish Federations.

With this in mind, Jewish activists have launched a full-court press to "save the refugee program," said Aviv, who is leading the charge for the organized Jewish community.

Immigration issues have long been high on the organized Jewish community's agenda, not only because of Jewish immigrants and refugees coming to the country today, but because most American Jews come from immigrant families.

Because of this overall concern, Jewish activists are also actively opposing another proposal making its way around Capitol Hill. That proposal would reduce the number of immigrants allowed in the United States each year by one-third, from 830,000 to 550,000.

Refugees are afforded special access to the United States and special benefits because they are presumed to be fleeing persecution.

Most Jews from the former Soviet Union arrive under refugee, rather than immigrant, status.

Jewish activists caution that even if they are successful in keeping the provision that would reduce the number of immigrants out of a Senate bill now under consideration, this is only one of many battles ahead on the immigration front.

Of about 100,000 Jews expected to emigrate from the former Soviet Union this year, some 25,000 are expected to arrive in the United States. The rest are expected to go to Israel.

A full 32,000 are permitted entry into this country, but due primarily to bureaucratic shortfalls at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the actual number is lower.

Lautenberg amendment would guarantee refugee status

Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) provided one positive note for immigration activists when he included the so-called Lautenberg amendment in the State Department Authorization bill now under consideration in Congress.

Named for Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), the measure virtually guarantees Jews in the former Soviet Union refugee status because it declares that Jews are fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution.

The Gilman measure extends the Lautenberg amendment through fiscal year 1997.

By then, an estimated 130,000 to 140,000 Jews are expected to be in the pipeline, waiting to come to the United States, according to Mark Seal, associate executive vice president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish communal organization most directly involved with resettling Jewish refugees.

Of the impending changes, Seal said, "We want the highest possible annual numbers, but we will create a program that works under any limitations."

How quickly Jews in the pipeline actually arrive would depend on the number of refugees allowed in the United States in future years. In the

current climate of budget cuts and anti-immigrant sentiment, there at least two proposals for reducing the number of refugees.

Under his budget proposal, President Clinton has recommended reducing the annual number of refugees allowed in the United States from 110,000 to 90,000.

Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), who chairs the Senate's Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, is urging Congress to cap the number of refugees at 50,000 annually.

Simpson's subcommittee is expected to vote on the proposal as early as the end of this week.

The subcommittee will then send its bill to the Senate floor.

Activists fighting to preserve refugee access to the United States suffered another blow this week when a bipartisan Commission on Immigration Reform recommended cutting immigration by one-third.

The commission, which is headed by former Rep. Barbara Jordan, a Texas Democrat, has proposed a gradual reduction over the next decade, from the current level of about 830,000, to an eventual 550,000.

In the interim, an estimated 650,000 would be admitted annually.

The commission is expected to take up the refugee program in the coming months.

Also at stake as Congress tackles immigration reform is the fate of the families of about 10,000 Jews who came to the United States as immigrants and are not afforded the protections refugees get, according to activists. In addition to emigrants from the former Soviet Union, Jews have arrived from Iran and Syria.

Despite the drastic reduction in immigration being proposed, the changes could benefit some immigrants and refugees already in the United States, depending on which relatives they are awaiting.

Under the commission's recommendations, which were set to be presented to Congress this week, spouses and children of legal aliens would get visa preference. At the same time, the commission recommended eliminating the backlog of visa applications already filed on behalf of these categories.

For U.S. citizens, immediate relatives — including parents, spouses and children younger than 21 — would continue to be allowed to immigrate with no waiting period or limits to the number admitted annually.

The commission was also expected to recommend that Congress eliminate immigration preferences for other close relatives, such as brothers, sisters and adult children of U.S. citizens.

As the various recommendations and legislation wind through Congress, the Jewish community is standing firm.

"The Jewish community will not support cutting back immigration and refugee programs," Aviv said as she prepared for the upcoming battles on Capitol Hill. □

Clinton calls on Assad as secretary heads to region

WASHINGTON, June 6 (JTA) — President Clinton telephoned Syrian President Hafez Assad Tuesday in an effort to accelerate Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations prior to Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the region later this week.

Clinton made "a very brief call to touch base prior to the arrival of Secretary Christopher" in Damascus, White House spokesman Michael McCurry told reporters Tuesday.

McCurry, who declined to reveal whether Clinton had any special message for Assad, said, "Progress on the

Israeli-Syrian track is something the administration has been urging on both parties."

Appearing on CNN's "Larry King Live" on Monday night, Clinton voiced optimism about the prospects for achieving an Israeli-Syrian peace deal before the end of the year.

"I think we may have a chance to make it this year," said Clinton, adding that he believes that "President Assad wants peace."

"There are a lot of difficult stones in the road, and we may not make it, but I think we've got a chance," he added.

Israel and Syria reached a procedural accord May 24 that opened the way for detailed negotiations on an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Top military officials from Israel and Syria are expected to resume talks in Washington later this month after similar discussions were abruptly called off by Syria in December. □

Helms adds his voice to Jewish restitution effort

By Alissa Kaplan

NEW YORK, June 6 (JTA) — Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) has joined the effort to get Eastern European countries to return or compensate for Jewish property confiscated during World War II.

The move by the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee comes after Stuart Eizenstat, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union in Brussels, recently met with Hungarian officials in connection with the Jewish property issue.

As a result of his Budapest talks, Hungary is likely to become the first Eastern European country to make a broad agreement on the Jewish property question, according to a World Jewish Congress official.

In an interview here, Eizenstat said he was satisfied with the steps Hungary has taken to address the property restitution issue.

Helms said countries in the region must deal with the issue if they are to prove themselves democracies.

"If these states fail to address this fundamental injustice, the United States would have to question their credentials as nascent democracies," Helms wrote in a letter to WJC President Edgar Bronfman.

Bronfman has been leading a campaign to get Eastern European governments to address the question of compensation or restitution for millions of dollars of Jewish property seized by the Nazis during the war and then nationalized by the Communist regimes.

In a May 18 letter to Bronfman, President Clinton said: "People everywhere are grateful for the progress you have made to restore property unfairly confiscated during and after World War II."

Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, said the subject "has support across the political spectrum" in the United States.

In his letter, Helms said, "The Jews of Europe suffered for so long, and those who lost property as a result of Nazi and Communist tyranny have an undeniable right to restitution.

"The WJRO (World Jewish Restitution Organization) has taken the lead by focusing international attention on this problem, but the United States government also has a role to play."

Helms' letter follows an earlier appeal by member of Congress to Secretary of State Warren Christopher to pursue the issue with Eastern European nations. □

(JTA correspondent Agnes Bohm in Budapest contributed to this report.)

After decades of silence, Eichmann's son goes public

By Gil Sedan

BONN, June 6 (JTA) — The son of Adolf Eichmann has gone public, saying he harbors no resentment toward Israel for executing his father and would like to visit the Jewish state.

Ricardo Eichmann, 40, speaking during a telephone interview, said he is glad that he does not have to confront his father.

But, he added, he still carries the burden of his father's actions, 33 years after he was executed.

"I tend to compare our family history to that of a multistage rocket. My father was the part that was dropped to the sea shortly after takeoff, while we continue flying," Eichmann said, adding, "I am glad I do not have to live with him."

"There is no way that I can explain what happened [during the Holocaust]. I just cannot understand it," he said.

As Hitler's chief aide, Adolf Eichmann oversaw the deportation and murder of millions of Jews during World War II.

After the war, Eichmann fled to South America. In 1960, he was kidnapped by Israeli agents in Buenos Aires. He was then flown secretly to Israel, where he was brought to trial.

On the night of May 31, 1962, he was hanged, becoming the only person ever to receive capital punishment in the Jewish state.

After his execution, Eichmann's ashes were dispersed in the Mediterranean Sea.

Ricardo Eichmann, the youngest of four brothers, was 7 years old at the time of his father's execution.

The family returned to Germany shortly after the trial began. Eichmann said his mother, Veronika, never told him what his father did or how his father died.

For years, he thought his father had merely disappeared. It was not until he reached his early teens and began reading about the war that he learned what his father had done.

Eichmann led a quiet life in Berlin until he accepted an appointment in April as professor of Middle Eastern archaeology at Tübingen University in southern Germany.

Appointment made him go public

The local media ran a story about the new professor, and that in turn led to further stories in the German and Israeli media.

Had it not been for the appointment, Eichmann said in the phone interview, he would probably have kept his silence. Until recently, he had never spoken in public about his father.

Eichmann said he had dismissed the idea of changing his name to hide his identity.

"This would have been only an exterior change. I would have been left with the burden," he said.

In an interview published in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Eichmann said he was glad that he would never have to confront his father.

"I am glad that the trial and sentence took place then, and that as a grown up, thinking man I don't have any contact with him," Eichmann told Ha'aretz.

Asked how he felt about talking to an Israeli, Eichmann said that he comes from a different school of thought than his father.

He said he did not judge people by their nationality or religion.

He admitted that as a child he may have felt anger

at the Israelis for abducting his father, but that in subsequent years he harbored no such feelings.

Asked whether he thought Nazism could return to Germany, Eichmann said, "I don't believe so. I promise you one thing, though: If the Nazis came to power in Germany, I would pack a small suitcase for each of my children, and get out of here." □

(JTA correspondent Uriel Masad in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Court in Denmark approves extradition of neo-Nazi Lauck

By Gil Sedan

BONN, June 6 (JTA) — A Danish court has backed a German request to extradite American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck.

A district court ruled Tuesday that Lauck's written and verbal attacks on Jews violated Danish anti-racism laws, allowing for the extradition.

If the extradition occurs, Lauck will face charges of smuggling banned hate literature into Germany for two decades.

Lauck, 41, was arrested March 20 in Denmark at the request of German police.

Lauck is the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party-Foreign Organization, a name that is derived from the official name of the party of Adolf Hitler.

Dubbed the "Farm-Belt Fuehrer" by the Anti-Defamation League, Lauck set up his base in Lincoln, Neb., from where he shipped anti-Semitic and racist literature to Germany.

Abraham Foxman, ADL national director, said, "Bringing Lauck to justice will send a clear message around the world that Nazism, anti-Semitism and racism will not be tolerated."

Lauck has said his group is heir to the Nazi party and that Hitler was "too humane."

His group's publications include Nazi magazines in a dozen languages. Lauck, who served four months in a German jail in 1976 for distributing Nazi propaganda, has served as editor of a German-language newspaper called NS Kampftruf, which means "Nazi battle cry."

Germany bans the use or publication of Nazi symbols or ideology. Denmark and the United States have more liberal laws, which have been exploited by neo-Nazis to publish beyond the reach of German police.

In the past, Danish courts have turned down German extradition requests for neo-Nazi publishers.

But this case could put pressure on neo-Nazis working out of southern Denmark, according to sources.

Lauck's lawyer, Erik Liisborg, has already filed an appeal, claiming that the extradition to Germany could not take place because Lauck's publishing activity is based in Nebraska and is not illegal under Danish law. □

About 1 in 3 Israelis light up daily

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, June 6 (JTA) — Nearly a third of all Israelis light up daily, according to figures released by the Health Ministry in conjunction with the observance of the World Health Organization's International No Smoking Day.

The ministry said of those Israelis who smoke, 30 percent smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day.

On an upbeat note, the ministry noted a relative drop in smokers in the 18-24 age group.

Legislation against smoking in public places was recently adopted. □

Israelis, Palestinians report breakthrough in autonomy talks

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, June 6 (JTA) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators meeting in Cairo have announced a breakthrough in their talks on extending Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank.

The head of the Israeli team, Maj. Gen. Oren Shahor, told reporters Tuesday that the talks would now focus on the transfer of authority in more than 30 spheres of local government in the West Bank.

Previously, Israel had insisted on a so-called "early empowerment" in only eight spheres of civilian control, despite Palestinian demands for full autonomy in the West Bank.

"The Palestinian delegation last week asked us to change the idea of early empowerment and to do it this way. We had discussions, and we decided on it," said Shahor, who described the change in Israel's negotiating policy as a show of "good will."

Jamil Tarifi, the head of the Palestinian delegation, expressed satisfaction with the new focus of negotiations.

"Today we heard a new position from the Israeli delegation," he said. "We are happy to hear this."

Tuesday's breakthrough comes just weeks before the previously agreed upon July 1 deadline for reaching agreement on the next phase of Palestinian self-rule: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Arab population centers in the West Bank and the holding of Palestinian elections.

Some Palestinian officials have warned of a large-scale outbreak of unrest among Palestinians if that deadline is not met.

Under the terms of the self-rule accord, implementation of the next phase of Palestinian self-rule was slated to go into effect in July 1994. But it was delayed in part by a series of terror attacks against Israelis launched by Islamic fundamentalist opponents to the accord.

Despite Tuesday's breakthrough, the two sides still have major obstacles to overcome.

Separate negotiations on Palestinian elections have hit snags over the size of the Palestinian council that will be elected and over the question of whether Arab residents of eastern Jerusalem will be able to run in the elections.

And disagreements over the Israeli army's redeployment in the West Bank still loom, with Israel offering only a partial redeployment. Palestinian officials have countered that this would represent a breach of the self-rule accord and that they will not hold elections under Israeli guns.

Claims about Arafat's helicopter

Meanwhile, in the West Bank Jericho enclave, Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat convened a meeting of the Palestinian Authority on Tuesday to brief members on meetings with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher scheduled for later in the week.

Arafat was expected to ask Kohl and Christopher to pressure Israel to meet the July 1 deadline, as well as to seek continued financial assistance for the Palestinian Authority.

Arafat, who made Gaza his headquarters when self-rule began last year, has reportedly visited Jericho only twice since his return there in July 1994 to mark the launch of self-rule.

Arafat flew to Gaza on Tuesday in his private, Russian-made helicopter.

Arafat's flight angered residents of the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in Gaza.

They claimed he had purposefully flown his

helicopter low over the isolated settlement on his way to Jericho.

Also on Tuesday, Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley staged demonstrations to protest the uncertainty of their future once Palestinian autonomy is extended beyond Gaza and Jericho to the rest of the West Bank.

Schools were closed and people stayed away from jobs.

The settlers, who erected barricades to block roads, criticized the government for not informing them of the future status of the settlements, many of which were established by Labor governments in the 1970s. □

Poll: Most Americans seek PLO compliance before more aid

By Jennifer Batog

WASHINGTON, June 6 (JTA) — Most Americans want to halt U.S. aid to the Palestine Liberation Organization until the group complies with its peace accords, according to a recent poll.

The Luntz Research Companies survey, conducted May 20 to 23, asked 750 American adults three questions about PLO compliance, noting that Congress is now debating the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act.

The legislation, which allows for continued aid, expires June 30.

Proponents of the current Middle East peace process are urging that the legislation be extended. Opponents argue that it should be scrapped.

The survey questions were part of a national poll of public opinion on a variety of topics.

The PLO questions were the only questions concerning the Middle East Peace process in the poll by the Luntz group, which works mostly on behalf of Republican causes.

In the survey, 78 percent agreed with the statement: "In order for the PLO to receive U.S. funds, the PLO should be held accountable to its commitments and comply with the peace accords as a precondition for receiving the rest of the funds."

Only 12 percent disagreed. The remainder did not know or refused to answer the question.

The survey also found that 78 percent of those polled said they thought that the United States should suspend aid until the PLO removes terrorist groups such as the fundamentalist Hamas from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Likewise, 73 percent agreed that the PLO must remove clauses in its charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

The Zionist Organization of America sent a copy of the survey to every member of Congress in an effort to convince lawmakers to make PLO aid conditional on how well it complies with the peace accords' guidelines.

"Congress should consider the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans clearly do not want their tax dollars being sent to the PLO so long as the PLO continues to violate the accords," said ZOA President Morton Klein in a statement to lawmakers.

But not everyone is convinced.

"It's easy to get the answer that you're looking for when you ask a question that doesn't provide context," said Jonathan Jacoby, executive vice president of the Israel Policy Forum, which lobbies on behalf of the Israeli government's peace policies.

"Frank [Luntz] asked questions that either ignored the context or misrepresented it," he said of the prominent Republican pollster. "His answers are not surprising."

Jacoby added that the PLO "is not in violation of its accords," according to a recent State Department report.

The survey's margin of error was plus or minus 3.6 percent. □