



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The Israeli Cabinet approved the Hebron agreement after 12 hours of heated debate. The approval came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat sealed the long-awaited deal in the early morning hours. The agreement also includes Israeli commitments to further withdrawals from the West Bank.

■ Israeli Cabinet Minister Ze'ev "Ben-ni" Begin resigned his position as minister of science in protest of the Cabinet decision to approve the Hebron deal.

■ President Clinton hailed the accord on Hebron and invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to Washington. Praise for the agreement poured in from around the world, including from the United Nations and the European Union.

■ Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres, who helped launch the current Israeli-Palestinian peace process, said the sealing of the Hebron agreement marked "the beginning of the end of a deep ideological rift" in Israeli society over control of biblical land.

■ The former president of Switzerland apologized for calling Jewish demands for a Holocaust compensation fund "blackmail." The apology came in a letter to Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress. The group said it would now resume working with the Swiss government. [Page 4]

■ A Canadian federal appeals court ordered the resumption of legal proceedings against three accused war criminals from World War II. The court said a request by a Justice Department official to a federal judge last March was not a serious breach of judicial independence.

Because of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 20.

HEBRON AND BEYOND

Mix of relief, disappointment pervades U.S. Jewish community

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — Relief, resignation and disappointment rippled through the American Jewish landscape in the wake of this week's signing of the long-delayed agreement on the Israeli redeployment in Hebron.

But despite the range of reaction, there was little fear that the accord would sow the kind of deep divisions here that are erupting throughout Israel, where some settlers have threatened to try to bring down the government.

The agreement, reached early Wednesday morning after months of delay, provides for the transfer of most of Hebron to Palestinian control as well as commitments to future Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank.

Centrist organizations said they welcomed the accord. They hailed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for holding firm in the face of domestic opposition and fulfilling his international obligation to advance the peace process.

They also took pains to laud the efforts of U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross and Jordan's King Hussein to help orchestrate the deal. And they urged other Arab nations to renew the normalization of ties with Israel.

"I start from the premise that the majority of American Jews support the peace process, and that includes the Oslo agreements," Martin Raffel, associate vice chairman of National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, said, referring to the Israeli-Palestinian accords that provided a framework for the process.

"And I think that what happened will serve to alleviate concerns by some that this Israeli government's approach to the peace process would lead to deadlock."

Raffel said reactions from community relations councils across the country were "positive but measured."

People are wary of waxing "euphoric," he said, because "they sense the road ahead will be no less difficult than the road already traveled."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, concurred that "reaction overall is positive."

"There always will be people who are unhappy" with agreements, said Hoenlein, whose organization welcomed the pact. "But the vast majority support it and realize the international obligation Israel had to fulfill."

Real concern for Hebron's Jews

While there is real concern by some about the safety and security of Jews living in Hebron, said Hoenlein, the agreement's "real test is its implementation." He said the conference, which represents groups across the political spectrum, would be "pro-active to make sure the rhetoric is responsible" when it comes to public pronouncements on the accords.

Orthodox Rabbi Haskell Lookstein of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan is also concerned about civility in public discourse within the Jewish community and in relations between Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

But Lookstein, who recently hosted an interdenominational meeting of rabbis seeking such civility, was not alarmed about the immediate repercussions of the Hebron agreement. "I think this is something the prime minister had to do and I'm glad he did it, even though leaving any part of Eretz Yisrael is something of great pain and tragedy to me," he said.

He said he expected some people to "cry out very strongly" in protest against the agreement, but would be doing so "to create more pressure to prevent what they see as undesirable compromises in the future."

Overall, though, he sounded a pragmatic note. "I would hope that people would recognize the reality of the situation," said Lookstein.

Netanyahu "slowed down the process" to give Israel "a greater opportunity to deal with issues of security for Jews in all parts of the Land of Israel."

"We have to be able to live with Palestinian Arabs next to us" and the Israeli government has "found the best kind of modus vivendi for the crisis."

Chaim Kaminetsky, president of the National Council of Young

Israel, an Orthodox synagogue movement that includes many members with families living in the territories, was not so sanguine.

"Everybody knew it was inevitable," he said of the agreement. "But I'm very unhappy about it. I'm disappointed it had to come to this."

At the same time, he expressed confidence in Netanyahu's commitment to protect Israelis' security. "I'm hopeful," he said. "He knows better than anyone who he's dealing with."

For his part, Yechiel Leiter, head of the foreign desk for the Yesha Council, which represents 144 settler communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said he had been "inundated" with calls from sympathizers during his visit to New York this week.

Many are upset about the agreement and critical of Yesha's decision to come to the government's defense, said Leiter, who lives in the West Bank settlement of Eli.

They are saying that if Netanyahu "is doing the same thing as Peres, we should go for the jugular."

He said his response to the agreement is: "It's bad, it's wrong, but it's the best we could get in the context of what Netanyahu inherited."

"We've been consistent," Leiter said of his movement. "We've been opposed to Oslo from the outset because it has the potential for war rather than peace. We said it's best if we end the dance with the wolves."

"But Netanyahu has said, 'I can dance with the wolves and get a better deal.' And that just remains to be seen." So far, said Leiter, who is also chairman of the One Israel Fund, which raises money in the United States for humanitarian causes in the territories, the current accord is a big improvement over the agreement forged under former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

As examples, he cited limits set on how high Palestinians are permitted to build around the Jewish community in Hebron and a new provision for a buffer zone between that community and Palestinian police stations where weapons will be housed.

'We've got to lobby from within'

Meanwhile, Leiter distanced Yesha from recent comments by a colleague, quoted in The New York Times, indicating that his movement would seek to bring down the government. "We are not encouraging" the "toppling of the government," he said. "What will we get? If the government fell, any leverage we have will be completely nullified."

Instead, he said, "we've got to lobby from within." Leiter, like others, expressed concern about how enforceable provisions for the extradition of Palestinian terrorists would be.

Israel maintains that the Palestinians have not been complying with the extradition provision in previous accords. And Leiter said he is not convinced of the effectiveness of the U.S. letters guaranteeing reciprocity that accompany the agreement.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Americans for Peace Now hailed the agreement as a "historical turning point." But it also cautioned that there are many unknowns and areas of disagreement between the two sides, most notably the extent of territory in the West Bank from which Israel must redeploy by mid-1988. The degree to which the differences can be bridged, said an APN statement, "depends on President Arafat's ability and resolve to control Palestinian acts of terror originating from the Palestinian Authority's domain."

"Of equal importance," the group said, "is Prime Minister Netanyahu's willingness to put pragmatism over ideology by exchanging a significant amount of land in return for peace and security." □

Chronology of recent developments

NEW YORK (JTA) — The following is a chronology of key events leading up to this week's agreement for Israel to turn over most of the West Bank town of Hebron to Palestinian control:

1993 • Sept. 13 — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat exchange a historic handshake on the White House lawn as the two sides sign the Declaration of Principles, a timetable for launching self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

1994 • May 4 — Israel and the PLO sign the Cairo Agreement for establishing self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho. Jericho comes under self-rule on May 13. Israel completes its withdrawal from Gaza on May 18.

1995 • Sept. 28 — Rabin and Arafat sign the Interim Agreement, which sets the stage for an Israeli withdrawal from six West Bank towns. The withdrawals begin in October. A redeployment in Hebron is set for March.

• Nov. 4 — Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by Yigal Amir, a 25-year-old religious Jewish law student, after a Tel Aviv peace rally. Shimon Peres steps in as prime minister.

1996 • Jan. 20 — Palestinians in the territories vote for the first time to elect an 88-member legislative body. Arafat is elected leader of the Palestinian Council with 90 percent of the vote.

• Feb. 25-March 4 — A series of Hamas suicide attacks in Israel claim 59 innocent lives and wound some 220 others.

• March 13 — Leaders of 29 nations, including the United States, Israel and 14 from the Muslim world, meet at an anti-terror summit in the Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheik.

• May 29 — Israelis narrowly elect Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister.

• June 22-23 — Egypt hosts the first Arab League summit in six years in an effort to develop a united front against the Netanyahu government's approach to the peace process.

• July 23 — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy meets with Arafat in what is the Palestinian Authority leader's first meeting with a senior official in the Netanyahu government.

• Sept. 4 — Netanyahu and Arafat hold their first meeting. Both sides agree to discussions on redeployment from most of Hebron.

• Sept. 25 — Palestinian rioting erupts in response to the opening of a new entrance to an ancient tunnel alongside the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City. In three days of violence, 15 Israelis and 61 Palestinians are killed.

• Oct. 1-2 — Netanyahu, Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein attend an emergency summit in Washington. The summit ends with an agreement for Israel and the Palestinians to launch intensive discussions on Hebron.

• Oct. 7 — Negotiations regarding the Hebron redeployment begin. The ensuing three-and-a-half months of talks, mediated by U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, are marked by hopeful statements, angry recriminations and threats that the peace process may collapse.

1997 • Jan. 1 — An off-duty Israeli soldier wounds seven Palestinians in a shooting rampage in the central Hebron market.

• Jan. 12 — King Hussein of Jordan intervenes in the negotiations, breaking a critical deadlock.

• Jan. 15 — Netanyahu and Arafat reach an agreement on Hebron and further withdrawals from the West Bank during a nighttime summit. □

HEBRON AND BEYOND

After months of renegotiation, deals include new commitments

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The agreement that Israel and the Palestinians reached this week for transferring most of Hebron to Palestinian control grew out of a mutually felt need to reopen an earlier agreement.

This week's accord has its roots in the Interim Agreement that Israel and the Palestinians signed in Washington in September 1995.

That agreement, building on a process launched in 1993 known collectively as the Oslo accords, spelled out a timetable for the turnover of six West Bank towns to Palestinian self-rule. Only one of those towns — Hebron — had Jews and Palestinians living side by side. For this reason, the transfer of control there was delayed for several months beyond the timetable for the other towns.

But a series of Hamas terror attacks in Israel in February and March 1996 led to a postponement of the Hebron redeployment, which was initially scheduled for last March.

When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assumed office last June, his government, in part concerned with the safety of Jewish settlers, sought to reopen negotiations for the implementation of the Hebron pullback.

For their part, the Palestinians were concerned that the conservative Netanyahu government would not proceed with the three further redeployments in rural areas of the West Bank that the Interim Agreement called for after Hebron. As a result, Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat sought to broaden the Hebron negotiations to achieve assurances that Netanyahu would continue with those further redeployments.

The agreement reached this week consists of two parts: a protocol concerning the Hebron redeployment and an American-written "note for the record" that addressed non-Hebron issues, providing what is being called "a road map" for the future phases of the peace process.

In addition, the United States provided letters of assurances to each side, spelling out what each expected the other to do in the coming months.

Creation of buffer zone

The protocol on Hebron includes the following points:

- **The Redeployment:** Israel agrees to redeploy from 80 percent of Hebron within 10 days of the agreement's signing. This represents the first time that a Likud government has agreed to give land to the Palestinians. The move signals that Netanyahu, after months of vacillation and inaction, appears to have concluded that there is no other choice for Israel than to continue the peace process of his predecessors.

At the same time, he can argue that he won important concessions in order to protect Hebron's estimated 500 settlers.

- **Security:** A buffer zone will be created around the Jewish Quarter and in the surrounding hills. Palestinians will not be permitted to carry weapons in these areas unless authorized by Israel. Palestinian police will create roadblocks to prevent any Arab assaults on the Jewish Quarter. The security measures also call for the creation of joint patrols to operate in areas of particular sensitivity.

- **Palestinian Police:** Reaffirming the original Interim Agreement, the protocol calls for the deployment of 400 police, who will be required to pass a security test to determine their suitability.

The police will be armed with 200 pistols and 100 rifles. The rifles are only for the protection of their four

police stations in the Palestinian area, designated as H-1. Palestinian teams armed with rifles may enter the buffer zone only with the prior approval of Israeli security.

In the joint patrols, the rifles used by the Palestinians will have a shorter range than those used by their Israeli counterparts.

- **The Tomb of the Patriarchs:** The two sides agreed to postpone discussions regarding this site, holy to Jews and Arabs alike. In the meantime, Israel will have sole control over security there.

- **Shuhada Street:** The main street, which runs through the Jewish enclave, will be rebuilt with U.S. government money and reopened within three months. The reconstruction is aimed at providing a separation between Jewish and Arab traffic.

- **Civil Arrangements:** The Palestinians will gain control over civil affairs except in the Jewish Quarter, which is designated as H-2, concurrent with the Hebron redeployment. Proposed construction will be coordinated between the two sides. Palestinians will control municipal services throughout the city. To prevent the settler community from being choked off by the authorities, Israel secured from the Palestinians a commitment to provide those services to all Hebron residents without discrimination. The U.S. "note for the record," which addresses issues beyond Hebron, includes reciprocal commitments to adhere to the Interim Agreement.

Among the Israeli commitments:

- **Further Redeployments:** Israel agrees to carry out the first of the three redeployments in rural areas of the West Bank in the first week of March 1997. The dates for the remaining two redeployments went unspecified in the "note for the record." But in the letter from Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Israel, a date for the third and final redeployment was spelled out — mid-1998.

Address thorny issues

Netanyahu's critics charge that he is giving away most of the West Bank before the conclusion of the final-status talks. Netanyahu can counter that based on the reciprocity of the agreement, further redeployments will be linked to Palestinian compliance with their commitments.

- **Prisoners:** Israel agrees to release Palestinian prisoners during the permanent-status talks, which will resume within two months after the implementation of the Hebron protocol and address such thorny issues as Jerusalem, settlements and borders.

Netanyahu will find his greatest ammunition against his critics in the commitments spelled out for the Palestinian side in the "note for the record." These Palestinian commitments include:

- **The Charter:** The Palestinians agree to complete the creation of a new charter, bereft of all calls for the destruction of Israel. Netanyahu has maintained that the April 1996 resolution of the Palestine National Council to amend the charter was ambiguous and never closed the door on the issue.

- **Fighting Terror:** The Palestinians agree to clamp down on terrorist organizations in their midst, to disarm militants and to prevent incitement and hostile propaganda against Israel.

If Arafat lives up to this provision, Netanyahu will have gone a long way toward achieving his promised "peace with security." If Arafat does not, the premier will have an excuse to halt the further redeployments.

- **Palestinian Offices:** Reaffirming the Interim Agreement, the Palestinians agree to operate offices solely in areas under their control. Under this provision, they will be expected to suspend official activities at Orient House in eastern Jerusalem, long a bone of contention between the two sides. □

Apology from Swiss official puts dealings 'back on track'

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jewish officials are declaring their dealings with Switzerland "back on track" after an apology from a top government official who called Jewish demands for a Holocaust compensation fund "blackmail."

Then-Swiss President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, who lashed out at his nation's critics on the eve of stepping down from the rotating post, said he was "very sorry that I offended your feelings as well as those of many other people concerned, particularly those of the Jewish community at large."

"I assure you this was not my intention," he wrote to Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress.

WJC officials said Delamuraz's apology has removed the principal obstacle to returning to negotiations with the Swiss on creating a preliminary fund to begin compensating Holocaust victims and their heirs who might be entitled to assets deposited in Swiss banks.

But just as Switzerland doused one firestorm surrounding the search for missing Jewish assets, a Swiss bank at the center of the investigation inflamed new tensions this week when it admitted to shredding documents from the World War II era.

The Union Bank of Switzerland said one of its employees discarded the documents last week, thinking that they were unimportant. At a hastily called news conference Tuesday in Zurich, the bank said it "regrets the incident." The action comes just weeks after the Swiss government ordered Swiss banks to preserve all archival material that might reveal details about wartime transactions.

"In principle, the documents and the Holocaust debate have nothing to do with each other," a bank spokesman was quoted as saying.

Authorities have opened an investigation into the material's contents.

A security guard reportedly rescued the documents and handed them over to Jewish community representatives in Zurich, who then turned them over to the police.

The guard was then reportedly suspended from his job, pending an investigation.

'Entire world is watching them'

Senate Banking Committee Chairman Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) called the reports "shocking and distressing," and the WJC said it was "astounded they would be doing this when the entire world is watching them."

The latest controversy comes amid new disclosures about the extent of Swiss-Nazi collaboration.

A recently declassified American intelligence report from 1946 released this week provides the first concrete evidence that Switzerland was actively and directly involved in shipping looted gold for Nazi Germany.

And other newly released documents reveal that Switzerland's wartime relationship with Nazi Germany extended beyond the economic to the military sphere.

Attention in Switzerland, meanwhile, continued this week to focus on whether to create a \$250 million compensation fund for Jewish claimants — a proposal that came out of discussions between Jewish and Swiss officials late last year.

A public dispute between Switzerland and Jewish groups broke out earlier this month when Delamuraz accused Jewish officials of trying to "blackmail" Switzerland into paying Holocaust victims \$250 million.

"If we agreed now to a compensation fund, this

would be taken as an admission of guilt," Delamuraz said in parting shots published in a newspaper one day before his term as president expired. "This is nothing less than extortion and blackmail."

Jewish officials were outraged by the remarks, which they said bordered on anti-Semitism. Moreover, WJC officials said the \$250 million figure had been proposed by the Swiss side.

Delamuraz, now economics minister, said in his letter this week: "The information on which I had based my statement regarding the fund was inaccurate."

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the WJC, said that with Delamuraz's apology, "it's fair to say that we have now removed the principal obstacle to returning to the constructive negotiations that were taking place" on creating a preliminary compensation fund for Holocaust victims and their heirs.

There have been some indications that Switzerland may be bowing to international pressure to set up a such a fund. The Swiss Cabinet said it would support the creation of a fund provided that it comes from dormant bank accounts, not government money. But Jewish officials have rejected the offer, saying that the money is not Switzerland's to offer and should come from the government.

Before reaching any decisions, the Swiss Cabinet said it would await the results of an investigation into Switzerland's wartime dealings.

Meanwhile, in the wake of Delamuraz's blackmail charge, Swiss Jewish officials have expressed concern about a wave of anti-Semitic activity in the country. Martin Rosenfeld, general secretary of the Swiss Jewish Federation, said this week that anti-Semitism has been surfacing in letters and phone calls to Jewish groups and virulent letters to newspapers. "There is clearly a connection," Rosenfeld was quoted as saying. "Many feel justified by Delamuraz, and also have the feeling that if a Cabinet member is allowed to express himself this way, then the threshold of anti-Semitism has been lowered."

Meanwhile, the latest installment in the evolving Swiss wartime collusion narrative provides evidence that Switzerland transported millions worth of looted Nazi gold to Spain and Portugal. D'Amato and WJC officials released documents this week showing that the Swiss National Bank shipped 280 truckloads of Nazi gold to Spain and Portugal as payment for German imports during World War II.

The gold, worth an estimated \$250 million to \$500 million, was plundered from Europe's central banks and confiscated from Holocaust victims, officials said.

The gold was carried in trucks bearing the Swiss national emblem and insured by Swiss companies, according to a 1946 U.S. intelligence memo and a transcript of a 1945 military interrogation of the Nazi official who headed Germany's wartime gold department.

One-stop laundering center

"Switzerland emerges as not only a banking center for Hitler's Germany, but a one-stop laundering center," Steinberg said.

A top Swiss National Bank official acknowledged that such shipments were made, but said they amounted to only one-fourth of the total cited by D'Amato and Jewish leaders. He denied claims that Swiss banks had laundered money for the Nazis and insisted that the shipments to Portugal and Spain were consistent with Switzerland's neutral posture during the war.

Responding to the Swiss assertion, D'Amato said, "We are tired of half-truths that only come out when they are faced with overwhelming evidence."

"The Swiss bankers were the profiteers, they were the Nazi bankers. They made blood money and that doesn't seem to me to be neutrality." □