

**Netanyahu meets Arafat, Mubarak at economic forum***By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — In a sharp contrast to the usual venues, the Swiss Alps provided the setting this week for the latest discussions about the future of the Middle East peace process.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held separate meetings Sunday with Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Davos, Switzerland, where all three were attending the annual World Economic Forum.

Netanyahu told a news conference that he and Arafat had a "very productive meeting," adding that the two would meet later in the week at the Erez crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip to discuss the next phase of the peace process.

But Arafat, addressing the political and business leaders assembled for the economic conference, lashed out at Israel, which he accused of breaking peace agreements and crippling the Palestinian economy.

He charged that Israel was confiscating Palestinian lands and building Jewish settlements, which he described as "illegal." He also said continued Jewish closures of the West Bank and Gaza were costing the Palestinian economy \$7 million a day.

Netanyahu told reporters that Israel had in fact eased the closures and was seeking to improve the Palestinian economy. In his remarks before the conference, the premier spoke of Israel as "not just the Silicon Valley of the Middle East, but the Silicon Valley of the whole Eastern Hemisphere."

"Israel is undergoing an enormous revolution," he said. "It is one of only three or four countries in the world being rapidly catapulted into a hub of high technology."

Netanyahu met Sunday morning with a group of leading industrialists, including Microsoft head Bill Gates, to pitch for foreign investment in Israel.

In comments later to reporters, Netanyahu described his meeting with Mubarak as positive, adding that the two had "talked about advancing peace on all fronts and about advancing bilateral relations."

**'Bound to be resolved'**

His meeting with the Egyptian leader, their first in more than six months, came in the wake of a recent chill in Israeli-Egyptian relations. Mubarak had refused to meet with Netanyahu until Israel signed an agreement for turning over most of the West Bank town of Hebron to Palestinian self-rule.

At a news conference Sunday, Mubarak said progress in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which were suspended last March, was tied to Israel's living up to the terms of the Hebron agreement, which was signed last month.

"I believe Syria says it's ready to start the talks, even if it may have some reservations," Mubarak said. "But this is a question of time, and it's bound to be resolved."

Israeli optimism about a possible renewal of the negotiations with Syria was shaken last week by a roadside explosion in southern Lebanon that killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded a fourth.

In Israel on Sunday, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai called on Syria, which has 40,000 troops stationed in Lebanon and wields significant influence there, to bring an end to the Hezbollah attacks on Israeli soldiers.

"Syria must be no less interested than Israel in advancing the political process," Mordechai told reporters during a tour of the Karni crossing between Israel and

Gaza. "It must use all its influence so that terrorist attacks won't take place."

"I don't know if this is a condition [for renewing talks], but the two things can't exist together," he added.

Netanyahu also was planning to travel to Amman this week to meet with Jordan's King Hussein. □

**Dutch call on E.U. members to prohibit Holocaust denial***By Tamarah Benima*

AMSTERDAM (JTA) — Holocaust-denial should be outlawed in all member states of the European Union, Dutch activists say.

The call was issued here last week during commemoration ceremonies marking the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on Jan. 27, 1945.

The Netherlands, which holds the rotating presidency of the European Union until July, should use its position to get the E.U. member states to endorse laws punishing the propagation of the so-called "Auschwitz lie," said Anita Lowenhardt, who chairs the Dutch Auschwitz Committee.

Hedy d'Ancona, a Dutch member of the European Parliament, the European Union's legislative arm, several years ago initiated a resolution to outlaw Holocaust denial among all the E.U. member states.

Since then, Germany has adopted legislation making Holocaust denial a punishable crime. No other E.U. nation has taken action on the issue. In Holland, Holocaust denial was already punishable under the country's existing statutes.

Some 500 people attended last week's Auschwitz commemoration, which first took place in 1952. It has been an annual event in Holland since 1957.

This year's ceremonies — Amsterdam Mayor Schelto Patijn was among the speakers — also marked the 40th anniversary of the Dutch Auschwitz Committee. Over the years, the committee has earned a reputation as a staunch opponent of discrimination and anti-Semitism.

Although the commemoration is not an official national event, the minister of health, E. Borst-Eilers, took part in the ceremonies as a representative of the Dutch government. The commemoration took place at a small memorial here that bears the inscription, "Never Again Auschwitz."

The memorial consists of broken mirrors that give a distorted reflection of the skies, signifying that "since Auschwitz, the heavens are broken." □

**Pamyat protests at Israel's Embassy***By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — Wearing black uniforms, about 30 members of an ultranationalist group demonstrated Saturday outside the Israeli Embassy in Moscow.

The demonstrators belonged to Pamyat, which means "memory" in Russian, the country's oldest ultranationalist group.

Headed by founder Dmitriy Vasilyev, the Pamyat members carried anti-Zionist banners and called on the Jewish state to extradite a former Russian citizen now living in Israel who allegedly killed a popular Russian musician four years ago.

Igor Talkov, who had close ties to Russia's ultranationalist movement, had been shot dead prior to a concert in Moscow. The slaying has never been solved.

But the extremist group believes that Talkov's manager, Igor Shliafman, who is Jewish, was responsible for the killing. Shliafman moved to Israel soon after the incident. □

# BEHIND THE HEADLINES

## Sharansky marvels at growth of Jewish education in Russia

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Semyon Tayts, an 11-year-old Jewish day school student, had never heard of the time when Hebrew instruction was forbidden.

For him, learning the language often involves nothing more difficult than looking up words in a computerized Russian-Hebrew dictionary.

His situation provided a stark contrast to the experiences of Natan Sharansky, who returned here last week as Israeli trade minister 11 years after he was released from a Soviet gulag.

During his visit, the former refusenik recalled how he and his friends strove to learn Hebrew secretly during the early 1970s. "Someone would write down the Hebrew lessons broadcast" by Israel Radio, Sharansky said. "Then, those who had learned 300 to 400 Hebrew words would be considered good language teachers."

Sharansky added that he was strongly impressed by the progress the Jewish community had made, especially in the area of education, since his departure from the Soviet Union as part of a 1986 prisoner exchange with the West.

Discussions with teachers at Jewish schools in Moscow indicated that Russia had achieved much during the past decade in granting greater religious freedom, he said.

The Jewish educators complained about lack of funds and discussed proposed improvements in their schools' curricula, Sharansky told a news conference.

"Those were quite normal complaints I could have heard from any Jewish educator in any country," he said.

Sharansky, who came to Moscow with the formal mission of improving Russian-Israeli trade ties, said he considered his meetings with members of the Jewish community the highlight of his visit.

Those contacts with the community proved that Russian Jewish life is as rich and diverse as in other nations where the tradition of Jewish life had never been interrupted, he said.

"These meetings had not been much different from those I've had in Jewish communities around the world," Sharansky said at one event last week, when he addressed more than 1,000 Moscow Jews in a packed concert hall.

### 'Had to fight the regime'

During a visit to the Jewish day school where Tayts studies, Sharansky told a gathering of pupils what today's Russian Jewish revival means to him as a former dissident.

"Years ago, you had to fight against the regime in this country if you wanted just to be a Jew," he said.

"I'm happy that this contradiction does not exist anymore," Sharansky added, sporting the school's trademark baseball hat.

Sharansky was the first member of the current Israeli Cabinet to visit Russia. One of his primary responsibilities was to lay the groundwork for a visit, scheduled for next month, by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Accompanied by a 70-member delegation from Israel's business community — the largest official Israeli delegation ever to visit Russia — Sharansky met with several members of the Russian Cabinet to discuss bilateral trade and future Israeli investments in Russian high-tech industries and real estate.

He said there was a unique potential for expanded business ties, given the high number of Jews from the former Soviet Union — about 700,000 — who arrived in Israel since 1989 and who could serve as a bridge between

the two countries' economies. He added that trade between the two countries now totaled some \$350 million, about the same as Israeli-Thai trade totals.

During a meeting he held with Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, the conversation turned from trade to the country's treatment of minorities.

"Anti-Semitism still exists," Luzhkov said. "However, in general, the way our society relates to different nationalities and religions has changed radically."

Sharansky's visit to Moscow also included a trip to Lefortovo Prison, where the KGB held him for 18 months before he was sent off to a labor camp on charges of spying for the West.

"I was probably the first man ever who was afraid to be late" for an appointment at Lefortovo, Sharansky said.

"If I were late, the prison officials could have used this as an excuse not to let me in."

Sharansky said he returned to Lefortovo not in hopes of receiving an apology, but to understand how far Russian reforms had gone since he left the country.

"Prison is the institution where you can see changes in a society very clearly," Sharansky said at an improvised news conference outside Lefortovo after taking a 90-minute prison tour with his wife, Avital.

He had brought with him a gift for the prison library: five copies of "Fear No Evil," a book he wrote after arriving in Israel. The book includes descriptions of how to stand up to injustice and not to give in to the interrogations at Lefortovo, Sharansky said.

But, recalling some of the prison's rules, he did not autograph his books: A prison rule prohibits marking up any books on penalty of their being confiscated.

Many things had changed inside the prison's stone walls, Sharansky said. Inmates are getting more food, radios are available and the windows that were bricked up 20 years ago now allow glimpses of daylight into the cells.

"I did not expect any apologies," Sharansky said. "In any case, the regime I was fighting against does not exist. Did I forgive them? Would you forgive anyone who is dead?"

His prison tour included a visit to cell No. 47, where he spent "some of the most interesting days of my life," as he put it.

"For me, this is the symbol of our common victory," he said of the cell. "That prison, that punishment cell, is really where I won the most important victory in my life." □

## German party to review Nazi pensions

By Daniel Dagan

BONN (JTA) — The junior partner in the conservative government of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said this week that it would look into finding a way to stop Nazi war criminals from receiving German state pensions.

Leaders of the Free Democratic Party also said Sunday that their first step would be to consult legal experts.

Earlier, the Labor Ministry had confirmed a television report that state-financed pensions had been issued to people directly involved in the Holocaust.

Such pensions have been paid since 1950 to individuals who suffered from injuries or "other hardships" during World War II, the ministry said.

A ministry spokesman said, "We didn't look into the criminal record of the beneficiaries, or into their possible involvement in Nazi crimes."

Others receiving the pension include Nazi criminals in the United States, South America, Australia and elsewhere. □

vocational training and emerge as part of the lowest class of workers."

"They don't get a second chance," she added. "Their entire future is determined by what happens in school at 7 or 8."

The North American Conference runs intensive after-school programs for 550 elementary Ethiopian students in Lod and Ramla. These supplementary kinds of programs are commonly available to other Israeli children whose parents can afford to pay for them.

Gordon would like to see the after-school programs extended to all 13,000 Ethiopian elementary students.

JDC-sponsored studies have shown that after-school enrichment can close educational gaps of Ethiopians within one to three years.

Such programs have other benefits as well. A father of three girls in one of the after-school programs told the teachers that he had no education in Ethiopia because he "could have walked for two days and never found a school," Gordon said.

"It was breaking his heart that he couldn't help his children and that they were failing in school."

Now the father, who is partially blind and cannot work, is attending the classes with his daughters, who are thriving. "He says this changed his life," Gordon said.

"Attention must be paid," echoed New York philanthropist Edith Everett, who helped press the JDC to take the new initiative.

Although it is too soon to talk of any funding initiatives, "we want to prepare the environment so people understand they may be called upon" to provide money, said Everett, the only lay person to attend the new coalition's recent first advocacy planning meeting.

Some say a highly public U.S.-based campaign is politically sensitive because it may be seen as an intrusion in the affairs of the Israeli government, whose mandate it is to absorb the immigrants. They also say it runs the risk of implying that the government has failed in the absorption efforts it has made.

But the JDC and others take pains to stress that the initiative is a partnership with the government and has received the government's blessing.

### **American initiative welcomed**

Israeli government officials have long maintained that the Ethiopian absorption is a high priority that has been assigned unprecedented resources. But they also have acknowledged its unique complexity. In a letter to the JDC's Israel office, Education Minister Zevulun Hammer welcomed the American Jewish initiative and pledged his cooperation and that of his top officials.

Meanwhile, a JDC plan outlining the parameters of the coalition notes that "only the government of Israel has the resources and power to make a sustained institutional impact." But it says a joint effort here and in Israel has been established to identify the most effective programs and to coordinate resources so that these programs can be provided to further Ethiopian educational integration.

The JDC receives funding from the annual campaigns of the United Jewish Appeal and local federations, which contributed millions of dollars to the Ethiopian rescue and resettlement effort.

Micha Odenheimer, who heads the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews in Israel, long has sought U.S. Jewish attention to the problem.

"Education is the only possible way for this group to escape" from crisis, and American Jewish involvement and spending "could make a major difference," he said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

Odenheimer was an outspoken advocate for the formation of the government-appointed Ben Ezer Commis-

sion, which in 1995 called for improving Ethiopian education at a cost of about \$17 million per year for three years. Only roughly a third of that is being allocated.

While he clearly would like to see some of these gaps filled by the American Jewish community, he said any involvement would help. It would spur more government accountability, making the problem a higher priority and ensuring that money is spent more "strategically," he said.

For those on this end, the new coalition is an effort to come together, as Foxman put it, to say to the Israeli government, "This isn't over, we want to help you." □

### **Ohio man denaturalized; had helped persecute Jews**

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Ohio man who had assisted in the persecution of Jews during World War II has been stripped of his U.S. citizenship by a federal judge in Cleveland.

Algimantis Dailide, 75, had served in the Vilnius Saugumas, the Lithuanian security service whose responsibilities paralleled those of the Gestapo, and had concealed his wartime past when entering the United States in 1949, Judge Paul Matia said last week.

Dailide, a Cleveland-area real estate agent, served in the Saugumas from 1941 to 1944 and "assisted in persecution of civilian populations," the judge said Jan. 30, making Dailide ineligible for U.S. citizenship.

The court's decision cited documents showing that Dailide took part in the arrest and search of Jews trying to flee their forcible confinement in Vilnius.

One document showed that Jews arrested by Dailide were destined to be shot and killed at Paneriai, a wooded area near Vilnius. Nearly 55,000 of Vilnius' 60,000 Jews died at Paneriai during the Nazi occupation.

Dailide had entered the United States in 1949 under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, claiming that he was a forester from 1942 to 1944 and specifically denying any police service.

This is the third case in which the Office of Special Investigations, the Nazi-hunting arm of the U.S. Justice Department, has sought and obtained the denaturalization of members of the Vilnius Saugumas.

In May, a federal court in Boston ordered the denaturalization of Vilnius Province Saugumas Chief Aleksandras Lileikis. He subsequently fled the United States and returned to Lithuania in June.

In 1994, Kazys Gimzauskas, Lileikis' deputy and a former resident of St. Petersburg, Fla., abandoned his U.S. residence and returned to Lithuania while still under OSI investigation. His citizenship was revoked in June.

Lileikis and Gimzauskas were Dailide's superiors.

A denaturalization suit is pending against Adolph Milius, who served in the Saugumas and who now lives in Tampa, Fla. □

### **Jordan to buy Israeli MRI equipment**

*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli manufacturer has for the first time won a Jordanian government contract.

The Elscint Corporation of Haifa, a leading manufacturer of magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, equipment, won a bid to supply the medical imaging system to the al-Bashir Hospital in the Jordanian capital of Amman, at a cost of \$1.4 million.

An official with Elscint said the company won the bid over several major international corporations, including General Electric, Siemens, Phillips and Toshiba.

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in October 1994. □



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Efforts to renew peace negotiations with Syria cannot continue until Damascus uses its influence to stop terror attacks against Israeli troops in Lebanon, said Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. Three Israeli soldiers were killed last week in a roadside bombing by Hezbollah. [Page 4]

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat are slated to meet later this week at the Israel-Gaza border to discuss further steps in the peace process. The announcement was made after the two leaders met in Davos, Switzerland, where they were attending the World Economic Forum. [Page 4]

■ The Belarus Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning anti-Semitism in the former Soviet republic. Belarus Jewish leaders had earlier called on authorities to denounce anti-Semitism.

■ A former deputy of French President Jacques Chirac oversaw the deportation of 1,000 Jews from occupied France to a Nazi death camp, the French magazine *Le Point* reported. Michel Junot, a deputy to then-Paris Mayor Chirac, had been a Vichy administrator, *Le Point* said.

■ A bill that would bar Israeli Arabs from running for prime minister was introduced in the Knesset. The measure, proposed by Geshet Knesset member Michael Kleiner, drew protests from opposition members, who said it was racist.

■ Israeli and Palestinian security officers prepared to open a thoroughfare near the Jewish community in Hebron to Palestinian traffic. Under the Hebron accord, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to gradually reopen Shuhada Street to Palestinian traffic while taking measures to separate the two populations.

■ An Israeli government official asked the justice minister to advance a bill that would prevent Reform and Conservative Jews from being members of local religious councils. Danny Naveh, Cabinet secretary, acted after an appeal by the head of the Shas Knesset faction, Raphael Pinhasi, Israeli media reported.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Jewish coalition joins effort to enhance Ethiopian absorption

By Cynthia Mann

NEW YORK (JTA) — One year ago in Jerusalem, a violent protest of Ethiopian Jews erupted after the discovery that Israeli health officials were disposing of their blood donations for fear of HIV contamination.

Consensus was that health officials had bungled badly. But there was also a recognition that the Ethiopians were expressing pain and outrage over the broader insult of not yet being accepted or absorbed by mainstream Israeli society.

Now, the American Jewish community, which raised millions of dollars to support the dramatic airlifts and resettlement of the Ethiopians in Israel, is being tapped once again to staunch a crisis in their absorption.

Unlike with Operation Moses in 1984 and Operation Solomon in 1991, however, the new effort appears to be less about money and more about pressing the Israeli government to pay closer attention.

For Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, the case for American Jewish involvement is clear.

The Ethiopian aliyah "exemplified what Israel and Zionism are all about," he said.

American Jews were the "proud partner" of a Jewish sovereignty that took a big risk and mobilized "to provide for the safety and security of Jews in need, regardless of color and continent," he said.

"We have a special stake in its success," added Foxman, who is helping to steer a newly formed coalition to address the issue. "If we fail, we fail in this historic moment."

For Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of the Reform movement, there is another compelling aspect.

"Israel has been spared many racial divisions that have so plagued America and other Western countries. Resolving this issue is of paramount importance lest this problem grow."

There are about 60,000 Ethiopian Jews in Israel, most of whom came from an agrarian environment and had little or no education.

Experts agree that intensive effort went into their initial absorption in Israel, and many successes have been reported. But they say more needs to be done to close growing social and economic gaps between them and other Israelis.

For the last few years, advocates have argued that Israel's strained educational system is not meeting the needs of Ethiopian youths and that solving this problem is key to their successful integration.

A full 57 percent of the Ethiopians are younger than 18, with 27,800 in formal educational settings.

Without an immediate and targeted expansion of educational programs, these experts warn, the Ethiopians will become a permanently disaffected underclass.

### 'We have a crisis'

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which operates humanitarian projects around the world, is spearheading the new coalition, which includes most mainstream Jewish organizations. The JDC's Israel-based operation has long run social programs for Ethiopian Israelis.

Coalition members say talk of new or special fund-raising here is premature. They want to make sure the problem is allocated high priority by the Israeli government and sufficient government resources. And they want to ensure that these resources are being spent effectively.

Merely the fact that the Jewish organized mainstream has agreed to take up the cudgel marks a victory for long-time advocates of Ethiopians, for whom time is of the essence.

"We have a crisis and if we don't intervene now, we'll create an underclass," said Barbara Ribakove Gordon, the New York-based executive director of the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jews.

"Israel has a tracking system," she said, referring to the public schools.

"If students don't do well in elementary school, they are tracked to