

NEWS AT A GLANCE

- **U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the United States will continue to back Israel's suspension of political talks with the Palestinians until they crack down on terrorism.** In her first speech on the Middle East as America's top diplomat, Albright also criticized Israel's recent building in eastern Jerusalem. [Page 1]
- **Palestinian security forces detained three Hamas activists on suspicion of involvement in last week's bombing in Jerusalem.** Meanwhile, Israel slightly eased its closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, allowing Palestinian workers at Jewish settlements and industrial areas.
- **Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan called on Israel to ease the sanctions on the Palestinian Authority.** At a joint news conference following talks with the prince in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended the measures. He said Israel's policy was intended to protect its citizens.
- **Dore Gold was officially installed as Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations.** In his remarks at the ceremony, Netanyahu's former foreign policy adviser expressed optimism that the peace process would get back on track "once security had been fully assured."
- **A Jewish couple in rural Alabama filed a federal lawsuit alleging that their local school district failed to stop anti-Semitic incidents directed at their children.** According to the lawsuit, the children were barred from wearing Star of David pins and were forced to attend a Christian-themed assembly.
- **An Orthodox Jewish jaywalker was awarded \$7,000 in damages because the city of Cincinnati forced him to break the Sabbath.** The man was forced to ride in a police car and sign the citation.
- **FBI agents arrived in Israel to further the investigation of the alleged subway suicide-bombing plot in Brooklyn, N.Y.** Israeli media said investigators were interviewing relatives of the two men detained after police discovered pipe bombs and explosives in an apartment.

NEWS ANALYSIS**U.S. backs Israeli halt of talks as Albright talks tough to Arafat***By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The United States will back Israel's suspension of political talks with the Palestinians until they clamp down on terrorism.

This was the message U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered in her first speech on the Middle East as America's top diplomat.

"It is simply not possible to address political issues seriously in a climate of intimidation and terror," Albright said at the National Press Club here Wednesday.

At the same time, the policy does not signal smooth sailing for Israel.

Albright also hinted that if and when Israeli-Palestinian talks resume, the United States would back the Palestinian demand to halt Israeli building in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank.

"The principle of refraining from unhelpful unilateral acts is central to maintaining mutual confidence," she said. "It is fair to ask: How can you create a credible environment for negotiation when actions are being taken that seem to predetermine the outcome?"

But Albright directed the bulk of her hastily arranged policy address at Yasser Arafat and his Palestinian Authority, warning that a total crackdown on terrorists and renewed security cooperation with Israel must come before the United States would support reconvening long-stalled peace talks.

"There is no place in the peace process for violence or terror, and there is no room for using security cooperation as leverage in a negotiation," said Albright, who because of the crisis in the Middle East changed the focus of her planned address, which originally was Asia.

The political situation has taken on a new urgency in the wake of last week's suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market that claimed 13 Israeli victims. Already tense relations between Israel and the Palestinians hit rock bottom as the two sides traded vehement rhetoric and cut off virtually all contact.

Albright, who stuck to a prepared text read from a Tele-Prompter, issued her challenge to Arafat in at least seven different ways during her half-hour speech. Sporting a gold pin of what many thought looked like a soaring dove, Albright offered to travel to the Middle East later this month to work at accelerated final-status talks if Arafat makes "a 100 percent effort" against terrorism.

In referring to final-status talks, Albright suggested that it would be easier for the parties to overcome setbacks and avoid distraction if the Interim Agreement is "married" to accelerated final-status talks.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has suggested moving right to final-status talks, which are supposed to address the issues of borders, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem.

'No winks, no double standards'

In the meantime, U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross is scheduled to travel to Israel this weekend for an open-ended mission aimed at restarting security talks.

Ross' mission was postponed from last week because of the terrorist attack in Mahane Yehuda, which also wounded 170 people.

Unlike his previous shuttles since the peace process became stalemated in March, Ross is believed to be armed this time with some pointed letters from President Clinton and Albright that are aimed at both Israel and the Palestinians.

To Israel, the Clinton administration is expected to indicate its concern over further construction in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank.

But the administration's main message is to the Palestinians.

"There can be no winks, no double standards, no double meanings and with respect to the imprisonment of terrorists, no revolving doors," Albright said.

"Nor can the level of security cooperation ebb and flow with the ups and downs of negotiations. The Palestinian commitment to fight terror must be constant and absolute.

Furthermore, she said, "there is no moral equivalency between

suicide bombers and bulldozers, between killing innocent people and building houses."

Albright drew high marks from Jewish officials whom she had briefed during a conference call only hours before her speech. "Every which way that one can say that violence has to be renounced, she said it," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Speaking to reporters on the White House South Lawn immediately after Albright's speech, President Clinton expressed similar sentiments.

"I know that it's been discouraging for the Palestinian Authority. I know they get frustrated. I know that sometimes Mr. Arafat feels like he's caught in the middle, between his own population and their discontents and frustration, and his frustrations in dealing with the Israeli government. But none of that can be an excuse for not maintaining security," Clinton said.

When asked if the Palestinians have lived up to their accords with Israel, Clinton said, "I could not say that there has been constant, 100 percent effort" to fight terrorism. Like Albright, Clinton also echoed Arafat's criticism of Israel's recent settlement policies, including building at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem.

"We don't think anything should be done which undermines the trust of the parties and violates either the spirit or the letter of the Oslo Accord, and which predetermines the outcome of final settlement issues under Oslo," Clinton said. "The government of Israel clearly has a responsibility to carry its end of the load, too. This has got to be a two-way street."

Now Israel and the United States are awaiting Arafat's next move.

"At the end of the day, the carrot to Arafat is that if you take terrorism seriously and you bring your concerns about settlements to the negotiating table, you're going to find the United States sympathetic on that issue," said Martin Raffel, chairman of the Israel task force of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

"That's not to say that the U.S. will pressure Israel," Raffel said, but Israel could find itself arguing against both the Palestinians and the United States. □

Israel's supporters at the U.N.: Washington — and Micronesia?

By Shammai Engelmayer
New Jersey Jewish News

WHIPPANY, N.J. (JTA) — It is practically a given these days. The Arab states will get the U.N. General Assembly to debate some action or other of Israel's, usually the construction of a new neighborhood in the southeastern Jerusalem suburb of Har Homa.

Everyone will say what they always say and then vote the way they always vote. That means that only three states will vote against whatever resolution is being presented: Israel and its two steadfast allies — the United States and Micronesia.

Micronesia?

Yes, Micronesia, or, more formally, the Federated States of Micronesia. With a population of 115,000, Micronesia is a conglomeration of four states — Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap — located on 271 square miles of islands in the western portion of the Pacific Ocean.

After World War II, Micronesia became a part of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and is today tied to America by a treaty known as the Compact of Free Association.

That is "something between merger and independence," explained Washington attorney Peter Rosenblatt.

Rosenblatt served, from 1977 to 1981, as President Jimmy Carter's "personal representative to the negotiations

on the future political status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands."

Rosenblatt, who held the rank of ambassador, negotiated the compact. He said the deal that emerged made the United States responsible for the defense and security matters of these states, while giving them economic assistance.

In other matters, Micronesia is independent, with one exception: "The United States has veto power over any aspect of their foreign policy which, in the final analysis, we alone determine is in conflict with our responsibilities for their national defense; but we have never invoked that veto."

The U.S. aid Micronesia receives — a total of \$1 billion since the compact was signed — is also its primary source of income, with farming, fishing and tourism running far behind. Indeed, said Rosenblatt, that is one explanation for the pro-Israel votes in the United Nations.

The compact, which will expire in 2001, must be renegotiated in 1999, Rosenblatt explained.

"I would suspect," he said, "that the government of the Federated States of Micronesia, looking forward to a resumption of these negotiations in 1999 — and understanding that the mood in Congress is not particularly generous when it comes to foreign aid — may decide that on issues that are of no particular concern to them, the best thing they can do is to please us, which is to say, to vote with us."

In support of his position, Rosenblatt noted that Micronesia's support for U.S. positions at the United Nations was cited in May in the U.S. Senate as a reason to continue supporting the FSM.

"The FSM has also been a strong supporter in the United Nations on key issues of concern to the United States," Sen. Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii) told the Senate.

'A particular affinity with Israel'

While U.S. economic aid could be the reason for its support of Israel, Rosenblatt thinks it may have more to do with Micronesian President Jacob Nena's roots in the state of Kosrae. "It's an island whose first contact with the outside world was through American whalers," he said.

"As a result, everybody in Kosrae is a Congregationalist [a Protestant sect]. And most of the people of Kosrae have biblical first names.

"My guess is that Nena, through the heavy emphasis the Congregationalists place on the Old Testament, probably feels a particular affinity with Israel."

Indeed, said Rosenblatt, "That my wife was born and brought up in Israel was very much a point in my favor with them, and many of them talked to me from time to time about their desire to establish close relations with Israel [and Israel] was very responsive."

That is also one of the reasons given by Micronesia's ambassador to the United Nations, Resio Moses.

"Israel was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with us [in 1986, when the compact became operative].

"Since our independence, it has been a very close friend of ours. Besides the United States and Australia, it was one of the few to send an ambassador to Micronesia."

"Our votes were not meant as approval of the new construction in east Jerusalem," Moses said. "In that, we accepted the position of the United States. We regretted the new construction and would have preferred that the situation was otherwise. Our vote, rather, was against the approach of isolating Israel in the diplomatic community."

Whatever the reason, Rosenblatt is happy with Micronesia's stance. "I feel very strongly about these people," he said. "I am delighted that they are as pro-Israel as they are." □

Administration proposes curb on number of Jewish refugees

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Clinton administration has proposed reducing the number of refugee slots for Jews and others from the former Soviet Union in the next fiscal year.

Out of 78,000 admissions authorized for the current year, 30,000 slots were allotted to refugees from the former Soviet Union. The administration plans to maintain the same number of total admissions for worldwide refugees next year, but with only 21,000 slots for refugees from the former Soviet Union.

The latter group includes Jews and persecuted Christian minorities, both of whom are allowed to immigrate to the United States under eased criteria.

While the White House and Congress have yet to work out the final numbers, as they do each year, the administration's proposal has dealt an unexpected blow to Jewish refugee advocates.

"We're deeply disturbed by this," said Martin Wenick, executive vice president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

"We know that the numbers as time goes on will decline because" the Soviet refugee program "is a specifically defined program, but we don't understand why the drop at this point is so significant."

U.S. law guarantees refugee status to those who have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin for political or ethnic reasons.

Once in the United States, refugees are entitled to certain economic benefits not available to other legal immigrants.

Under what is known as the Lautenberg Amendment, Jews and evangelical Christians from the former Soviet Union only have to show a "credible basis for concern" about the possibility of persecution.

Fewer applicants in recent years

The number of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union processed by HIAS has steadily declined over the last six years following an initial spurt of emigration that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The number of emigres declined from roughly 46,000 in 1992 to 35,500 in 1993, 33,500 in 1994, 22,500 in 1995, 18,500 in 1996 and about 16,000 projected for the current year, according to HIAS.

HIAS attributes the drop-off to the "finite" nature of the Soviet refugee program, which was designed to reunite family members with relatives living in the United States.

There have been fewer applicants in recent years as that goal has been achieved, officials say.

In the next fiscal year, HIAS is projecting the arrival of about 12,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union. But with thousands of evangelicals Christians also seeking refugee status, HIAS believes that the administration's proposed 21,000 cap may be insufficient to accommodate the needs of both groups.

For its part, HIAS recommended to the State Department that 30,500 admissions be allowed for refugees from the former Soviet Union in the coming year, with an overall ceiling of 111,550 for refugees worldwide.

Because the administration's proposal falls well short of those numbers, Jewish refugee advocates fear that there could be a significant impact on family reunification.

"This puts a further obstacle in the way of families being able to live together for the last years of their lives because a lot of the people we're talking about are the parents of people already living here," said Diana Aviv,

director of the Council of Jewish Federation's Washington office.

The Clinton administration, for its part, says its scaling back of refugee admissions has been dictated by changing facts on the ground — namely, a decline in new applications for refugee status.

Jewish refugee advocates, however, say that refugees have encountered numerous bureaucratic obstacles in recent years — exorbitant exit fees, for example — that are partly responsible for the decline in numbers.

They stress that if those obstacles were removed there would likely be an increased demand, which the new proposed limit would not be able to accommodate.

Part of the difficulty in allocating slots stems from the way refugees from the former Soviet Union are grouped.

For the current year, slots for European refugees — including those coming from the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia — were set at a combined limit of 48,000. Thirty thousand slots were designated for refugees from the former Soviet Union and 18,000 for refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Responding to what it called "changed circumstances in the former Soviet Union," the administration has proposed scaling back the overall European ceiling to 46,000 and tilting the balance toward those fleeing the former Yugoslavia.

Under the plan, 21,000 admissions would be permitted for those from the former Soviet Union and 25,000 from the former Yugoslavia.

Fearing that Jewish refugees may not fit under the proposed 21,000 cap, Jewish refugee advocates say they will push lawmakers and the administration to extend the overall cap beyond 78,000.

That may be difficult, given the trend of recent years.

In 1993, President Clinton set an annual ceiling for refugee admissions at 132,000. The number has steadily decreased — it is 78,000 for the current year.

Refugee advocates remain hopeful that the Senate will raise the ceiling.

They are pinning their hopes, in large part, on Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), who chairs the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration.

'It's not an easy fight'

At a recent hearing of his subcommittee concerning the annual refugee consultation, Abraham underscored the need for a "generous" refugee policy and took issue with what he termed the administration's "progressively lower commitments to refugee admissions."

"Continued anti-Semitism in the former Soviet Union and recent legislative efforts there that would severely restrict religious freedom argue for a continuation of our current program that helps Jews, evangelical Christians and members of other historically persecuted groups," Abraham said.

He was referring to a bill adopted by the Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament, and vetoed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin that would limit religious freedoms.

The appeal for boosting refugee numbers, however, is not likely to find a welcome reception in the House, where Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, has consistently advocated curtailing admissions.

His subcommittee is slated to hold its own hearings on the issue next month so that the numbers can be finalized by Sept. 30.

"This is not an easy issue and it's not an easy fight," said Aviv of CJF. □

Swiss Jews get death threats amid continuing anti-Semitism*By Fredy Rom*

ZURICH (JTA) — A new wave of anti-Semitic incidents is sweeping across Switzerland.

Several Jewish leaders were placed under police protection over the weekend after receiving death threats in the mail. Among those receiving the threats was Sigi Feigel, honorary president of the Jewish community of Zurich, who was seen escorted by two policemen as he walked along the city's streets.

Other Jewish communal leaders have received death threats, but they have sought to downplay them in an effort not to draw attention to themselves.

In a separate development, a band of neo-Nazis disrupted a celebration marking the 149th anniversary of the creation of the Swiss Confederation that was held last Friday at Ruetli, located near Lucerne in the heart of Switzerland.

They gave Nazi salutes and shouted Nazi slogans, but police at the scene did not attempt to intervene.

"We did not want to overreact," Reto Habermacher, a local police commander, said Sunday.

Habermacher said the group was very small and admitted that police had not sought to get their names.

Jewish leaders questioned why the police did not act as they are required to do under Switzerland's anti-racism law. "This incident shows that a lot of people in this country do not have the political will to act in accordance with the law," said Thomas Lyssy, vice president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland.

Another anti-Semitic incident occurred last weekend in Arosa, a resort located 100 miles north of Zurich.

Rabbi Abraham Pinter, principal of a 1,000-student yeshiva in England, had booked a vacation apartment in Arosa for himself and his family.

The reservation was confirmed by fax, but the landlord later contacted them to find out if they were Jewish. When Pinter's wife, Rachel, told them that they were, the landlord said, "We are not renting to Jews."

Abraham Pinter subsequently complained to the Swiss Tourist Office in London.

The office's director, Urs Eberhardt, apologized for the incident and offered the family another apartment in Arosa free of charge. But the family turned down the offer, not wanting to be exposed to any additional anti-Semitism there, Eberhardt said.

Instead, Eberhardt said, the family accepted an invitation to Montana-Crans, a resort in the French part of Switzerland, for a two-week vacation.

Lyssy expressed satisfaction with the way the problem was resolved.

"This is not the first time that such an incident happened in Switzerland, but it is the first time that Swiss officials reacted so quickly and generously," he said. □

Italy hands over meager effects taken from Jews during the war*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — Italy has handed over to the Italian Jewish community valuables plundered by the Nazis during World War II.

"The bags don't contain treasures, but behind them there are destroyed families, deportations and human suffering," Treasury Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi said Monday during the ceremony marking the return of the items.

He called the bags "a treasure of memory and a warning to never forget." □

The return of the property was triggered by a law passed by Parliament last month.

Italy's action represents an unusually quick response to the issue of Nazi-looted property, which has flared up throughout Europe in the past year.

The five sacks of valuables, which were discovered in a Treasury vault earlier this year, contain jewelry, precious stones, watches, coins, silver cutlery and other objects, personal items, gold and even gold teeth that were looted from Jews at the Nazi death camp of San Saba near Trieste.

"These are poor little personal effects, torn from people on their way to a horrible fate," Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, said after formally accepting the sacks from Ciampi.

The union will hand the property over to the Jewish community of Trieste, on the Adriatic coast of northern Italy.

The Nazis occupied Trieste in September 1943, and many local Jews were murdered in San Saba, the only Nazi death camp on Italian soil.

Claims for Holocaust compensation by the Trieste Jewish community, backed by a campaign last January in the local Trieste newspaper, prompted a government official in the city to open an investigation into what had happened to the possessions of Trieste-area Jews who had been sent to San Saba.

A Treasury Ministry commission established that the goods had belonged to Jews killed or interned in San Saba. The investigation revealed that the plundered treasure was taken by the retreating Germans to Austria at the end of the war.

After the war, it was brought back to Trieste by the Allies, but only a small fraction of it was claimed by surviving Jews. The rest was deposited in a Trieste bank vault and was sent to the Treasury in Rome for safekeeping in 1962. □

Rome court denies request, keeps Erich Priebke in detention*By Ruth E. Gruber*

ROME (JTA) — An Italian military tribunal has rejected a request to release former SS Capt. Erich Priebke from detention.

Monday's ruling came after Priebke's defense team requested an immediate release for the former Nazi, who is 83 and in frail health.

Priebke was sentenced in July to five years in jail for his role in the World War II massacre of 335 Italian men and boys at the Ardeatine Caves south of Rome. About 75 of the victims were Jews. He will be eligible to be freed within a year for time served during his trial and pre-trial detention. He is serving his sentence under house arrest at a monastery near Rome.

Italian television reported Monday that the monks at the monastery no longer want to keep him and that lawyers were looking for a new place where Priebke could be held under house arrest.

The court also delivered a guilty verdict last month against Priebke's codefendant, former SS Maj. Karl Hass.

The court sentenced both defendants to jail, but, citing extenuating circumstances, drastically reduced their jail terms. The court sentenced Priebke to 15 years but reduced the term to five years. It sentenced Hass to 10 years and eight months, but reduced the sentence to eight months.

Because Hass had been under house arrest since last November, he will not serve any time in jail.

The prosecution had demanded a life sentence for Priebke and 24 years for Hass. □