



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Two Israeli men were killed outside of Jerusalem. Security sources said one of the dead men was known to police as a loan collector and was possibly murdered to settle scores. [Page 2]

■ Israel's ambassador to the United States, Eliahu Ben-Elissar, described talks in Washington with U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross as positive and said they raised hopes of renewed negotiations between Israel and Syria. Ross is scheduled to meet with a Palestinian delegation Thursday. The sessions are scheduled in advance of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's planned visit to the Middle East next week.

■ The U.S. Justice Department moved to revoke the citizenship of Michael Negele, a 78-year-old Missouri man suspected of persecuting Jews while a guard at the Sachsenhausen and Plaszow camps during World War II.

■ Yale University told five Orthodox Jewish students that it would not pursue disciplinary action against them for violating the university's policy that requires all freshmen and sophomores to live on campus. The students, who say the mixed-sex atmosphere of dorm life is not compatible with their religious beliefs, are threatening to sue Yale if they are not let out of the housing requirement.

■ A German musician filed a lawsuit against the Berlin Opera for having fired him for an anti-Semitic incident during a tour in Israel. The 54-year-old bassist was in a hotel bar in Herzliya when he insulted the waiter and then signed "Adolf Hitler" on the bill.

■ Egypt rejected Israel's request to release an Israeli Druse sentenced to 15 years for spying for the Jewish state. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa said the "espionage issue is not a bilateral issue between Egypt and Israel."

■ The Israeli daily Ha'aretz and the International Herald Tribune launched their first English-language edition of Israeli news. The four-page supplement is edited by Ha'aretz and inserted into the Herald Tribune.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel seeks Republican support while bracing for possible clash

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Bracing for an anticipated policy clash with the Clinton administration, the Israeli government has spent the summer shoring up support from Republican members of Congress.

"We're going to need you" — that's the message officials in Jerusalem have been sending to visiting lawmakers and party leaders, worried that the Clinton administration will ask too much of the Jewish state as it pushes to restart peace talks.

By all accounts, the GOP is enthusiastically answering the call.

"We will continue to apply pressure that will be helpful to the Israeli government that the administration cannot ignore," Republican National Committee chairman Jim Nicholson said upon his return from a recent visit to Israel.

With U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's first trip to the Middle East next week aimed at reviving a moribund peace process, there is a widespread expectation that the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Clinton administration will clash over Israeli settlement policy as well as construction in eastern Jerusalem.

Already-strained negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians came to a virtual standstill in March when Israel launched a new Jewish neighborhood at Har Homa in southeastern Jerusalem and Palestinian terrorists attacked a cafe in Tel Aviv.

In the wake of a terror bombing in the open-air Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem, which killed 15 Israelis, Albright was expected to push the Palestinians to crack down on terror as she seeks an Israeli limit on new construction.

The question is when the disagreement with Israel will erupt — and how public it will be.

Believing that Clinton is sensitive to public pressure and partisan heat over his Middle East policy, senior Israeli officials met with more than two dozen visiting members of Congress in recent months, asking them to be "a lever" against the administration, according to sources.

While the call went out to many Democrats as well as to Republicans, it is the majority party that is best positioned to pressure the president.

Many Republicans see the Israeli government's request for support as a golden opportunity to put to bed the perception that the GOP cannot be trusted when it comes to Israel.

The stakes are high.

Although the next congressional election is more than a year away, both parties are mindful of the fact that with just a few thousand more votes, Democrats could regain control of the House of Representatives.

Republicans champing at the bit

Therefore, the potential to make inroads into the solid support that Democrats enjoy in the American Jewish community has the GOP champing at the political bit.

"There is no political calculus that if we support Netanyahu, it will help us in the next election," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group.

"But nobody will be disappointed if it make us look strong in the Jewish community."

It is ironic that not long ago, the Israelis were asking the Democrats to protect Israel from a Republican administration. A strategy to recast the Republican Party as the address for pro-Israel politicians would have been unthinkable.

Indeed, even diehard Republicans are not drawing any equivalency between Clinton, generally seen as a strong friend of Israel, and his predecessor.

Under President Bush, relations with Israel were strained.

But now the roles are changing.

Relations between Israel and the United States flourished with the simultaneous ascent of Clinton and the late Yitzhak Rabin — both of whom

agreed on key elements of the then-burgeoning peace process.

Now, with progress on the peace front largely frozen, differences between Clinton and Netanyahu, a more hard-line premier, are inevitable.

For its part, the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate historically have taken on the role of critic when it comes to the president's foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East.

And already, the Republican Party has taken advantage of the opportunity to position itself in Israel's corner.

During the past year, Capitol Hill has attacked the Clinton administration for:

- Postponing the required move of the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem;
- Sending United States Consul General Edward Abington to a spring conference in the Gaza Strip where Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat attacked Israeli policies;
- Fighting for U.S. aid to the Palestinians even after the State Department decided it could not certify the Palestinians were in compliance with their accords with Israel; and
- Defending trade with Syria while Syria allows planes to resupply the militant Islamic group Hezbollah through the Damascus airport.

While some Democrats joined these initiatives, including calls to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, they were almost always Republican-led.

And the GOP appears ready for more.

In a recent round table interview with a small group of Jewish reporters, Nicholson pointed to his August trip to Israel — his first overseas trip as chairman — as proof that the party assigns a high priority to its pro-Israel policies.

"You'll continue to see pressure from the Republicans on this administration to be supportive of the resolve that there is on the part of the [Israeli] government for peace, peace through strength, peace through compliance with the Oslo accords," said Nicholson, whose visit was sponsored by the National Jewish Coalition.

But Nicholson's spin and the Republican strategy have left Democrats bristling at the suggestion that the Clinton administration needs any push in the pro-Israel direction.

'This administration needs a lecture from no one'

"It's very easy to issue press releases and talk the talk," said Steve Grossman, national chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

"But when it comes to dealing with American policy that is supportive of the Israeli people and their leader, this administration needs a lecture from no one, least of all the Republican leadership or Jim Nicholson," said Grossman, a former president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobby.

In a sign of how sensitive the issue is, Grossman sought out the reporters who met with Nicholson to comment on the GOP's Israel policy.

But the Republicans are not backing down, engaging instead in some potent rhetoric.

"The majority's role is to support Netanyahu and to support the protection of Israel from the violence and the arrogance of Arafat," said Rep. Jon Fox (R-Pa.), a co-chair of the Israel caucus in the House.

"Frankly, it's against the Congress' wishes to ask Israel to stop building at Har Homa" and to curtail settlement construction, Fox said. "We must be used as a lever to educate the president on the importance of backing Israel."

During a recent trip to Israel, Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, took Arafat to task for not cracking down on Palestinian militants.

"The question is, has Arafat truly committed himself to the path of non-violence?" Gilman asked at a memorial service at the Mahane Yehuda market, the site of a double suicide bombing in July, which claimed 15 Israeli victims.

"So far, I'm not convinced."

Perhaps most significantly, Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) has used his Speaker of the House pulpit to lambaste the Palestinians on numerous occasions and voice his strong support for Israel.

After a speech Gingrich made in the spring to AIPAC, a major financial supporter of Vice President Al Gore lamented that he wished Gore had given Gingrich's speech.

While Republican officials acknowledge that much of the GOP's pro-Israel strategy rests on rhetoric, they say some of their legislative initiatives have forced the administration to pay more attention.

Congressional Democrats have been left in a conundrum.

"Obviously the Congress has been more in favor of the positions of Israel than the State Department and White House," specifically on Jerusalem, said Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.)

"I do not think people take a pro-Israel position to needle the White House," said Sherman, who recently returned from Israel, "but the flip side is that those with the party of the White House may feel some pressure or commitment to back the State Department." □

Police suspect criminal motive in shooting deaths of 2 Israelis

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two Israelis were shot dead this week near here in what appeared to be a settling of accounts between loan collectors.

Police Commissioner Assaf Hefetz said Wednesday that while security forces were still investigating all possible motives — including terrorism — there were strong indications that the background to the shooting was criminal.

According to police and witnesses, the first man, a Jerusalem resident, was shot at close range by assailants on a road near Kibbutz Ma'aleh Hahamisha, which is close to the West Bank.

Another man, identified as Ilan Dvash, a gardener, apparently drove by in his truck and stopped to help the first man. Dvash was then shot as well.

Witnesses who arrived at the scene said they saw Dvash in his truck, slumped over the wheel.

The first man, whose name was not immediately released but whose identity was known to police, was lying by the side of the road, witnesses said.

Police indicated that it was possible that the mob-style murder of the first man had to do with a dispute between loan collectors and money changers.

Police found several thousand dollars on the body of the first man.

Police were searching for a taxi with Israeli license plates that witnesses said they saw fleeing the scene toward the territories.

Several weeks ago, an Israeli woman was injured in a shooting in the area.

Wednesday's incident came amid heightened security alerts in the wake of the July 30 twin suicide bombing in Jerusalem that killed 15 Israelis. □

Not all Israelis endorse plan to establish ties with Croatia

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Word that a country will establish diplomatic relations with Israel is generally welcomed as a sign of decreased isolation for the Jewish state.

But in the case of the former Yugoslav republic of Croatia, the applause is far from unanimous — and much of the criticism focuses on the country's leader, President Franjo Tudjman.

The two countries recently agreed to create formal ties next month.

The move came after Tudjman said he plans to visit Israel and apologize for his nation's persecution of Jews during World War II.

Tudjman's nationalist policies are viewed by many as an attempt to rehabilitate the fascist Ustashe regime that ruled Croatia as a Nazi puppet state during World War II.

He drew particular fire in 1996 by declaring that he wanted to rebury the bones of Croatian fascists at a Yugoslav-built memorial to the thousands of Jews and Serbs slaughtered at the Ustashe's Jasenovac concentration camp.

Croatia had 25,000 Jews before World War II, most of them prosperous and largely assimilated.

Some 20,000 were killed by the Nazis or the Ustashe regime.

The Israeli government's decision to establish ties with Croatia came under sharp criticism last week from Labor Knesset member Yossi Beilin, who said Tudjman had yet to fully repudiate writings which cast doubt on the number of people killed during the Holocaust.

Beilin said that when he was deputy foreign minister in 1995, he turned down a request by Croatia to establish ties, saying Israel would do so only if Tudjman removed anti-Semitic sections from his 1989 book, "Wastelands of History."

Israeli officials viewed the book as anti-Semitic, and Tudjman subsequently issued a revised English version under a new title, "Horrors of War," from which the most controversial parts were dropped.

'He is simply a classic anti-Semite'

The director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Eitan Ben Tsur, last week defended the decision to forge ties with Croatia, saying that Tudjman had removed the anti-Semitic sections from his book.

Ben Tsur added that Tudjman had offered to visit Israel and place a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

Beilin charged last week that the changes were made only in the English-language version of the book and that Tudjman has never publicly apologized for the remarks that still appear in the Croatian-language edition.

"He is simply a classic anti-Semite, and the statements in the book are scary. When such a person is president of a state, we have a problem," Beilin said.

He added that in his view, the only reasons Israel had agreed to establish ties with Croatia was because "all of a sudden we've returned to a state of international isolation, so we welcome anyone."

Another motivation was suggested last week by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, which reported that the forging of ties will clear the way for Israel to sell Croatia more than \$100 million in unspecified "non-lethal" weapons.

The paper quoted a senior political official as saying that negotiations between Croatia and Israeli defense industry officials began in 1992 after Israel joined the countries recognizing Croatia as a U.N. member-state.

At that time, the Prime Minister's Office and the Defense Ministry began pressuring the Foreign Ministry to establish diplomatic relations with Croatia, Ha'aretz reported.

Defense Ministry officials would not provide any information about what the military sale to Croatia would include.

But military experts said it could cover a wide range of items such as tear gas, radar and electronic sensors.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center last week joined the chorus of critics urging Israel to reconsider forging ties with Croatia.

"I am afraid that interest groups which stand to gain from this decision are pressuring the government to establish relations, a step which we are likely to regret in the future," the center's Israel director, Efraim Zuroff, said in a statement. □

Swiss banks pressed to freeze the accounts of suspected Nazis

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The Simon Wiesenthal Center is stepping up its pressure on Swiss banks to identify World War II-era accounts bearing the names of possible high-ranking Nazis and their collaborators.

More than a month ago, the Wiesenthal Center submitted the names of 11 suspected Nazis culled from the list of 1,800 dormant wartime accounts publicized internationally by the Swiss Bankers Association.

The Swiss banks also implemented a mechanism by which the heirs of these accounts could regain their funds.

The 11 names included some known aliases of top Nazi officials as well as some names with slight variations in spelling from the Swiss list. A top aide to Adolf Eichmann, Hitler's personal photographer, the chief exterminator of Latvian Jewry and high-ranking French, Slovakian and Latvian collaborators appeared on the Wiesenthal list.

Now, after weeks of further research, the Wiesenthal Center has submitted an additional 94 names selected from among the names of 376 German and Austrian citizens found on the Swiss list.

Of the 94 names, 36 bear the first and last names of men who have been identified by the United Nations War Crimes Commission or who have appeared on a complete list of SS officers. Ten of these people have been accused of mass murder and torture, according to the Wiesenthal Center.

Of the remaining names on the list, many are identified only by their last names in the U.N. and SS lists and may or may not be identical to persons with the same last names who established wartime Swiss bank accounts.

In a fax to Christoph Meier of the Swiss Bankers Association, the Wiesenthal Center asked that "the assets of the 94 accounts be frozen, pending a formal investigation by Switzerland and Germany, to determine whether this money belonged to members of the SS and other Nazi organizations, who committed crimes against humanity."

After the Wiesenthal Center submitted the initial list of 11 names in July, Meier promised to work with the Swiss government in investigating the allegations.

"Since then, we have heard nothing, and I hope we are not facing more stalling tactics," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center.

"We will judge their level of commitment by how rapidly" they determine who put the money in the suspects' accounts and by what mechanism they put in place "to make certain that the assets in accounts set up by identified war criminals do not fall into the hands of their heirs," Cooper said. □

Award to German filmmaker spurs debate on her role as propagandist*By Tom Tugend*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — An award bestowed here on German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl has been sharply criticized and has revived the debate on her role as a Nazi propagandist.

In a larger sense, the appearance of the 95-year-old Riefenstahl raises the question of whether art can be separated from politics and morality.

Riefenstahl's long career ranges from silent-screen actress to underwater photographer.

But her name is invariably linked to her 1934 film "Triumph of the Will."

Shot at a Nuremberg Nazi party rally, it is considered one of the world's most notorious propaganda documentaries in which she used brilliant cinematic techniques to glorify Hitler and the Aryan ideal.

Riefenstahl, whose work is currently being exhibited in Hamburg, Germany, was in Los Angeles Saturday night to receive an achievement award by the Hollywood-based Cinecon, an obscure but well-respected group of movie buffs devoted to restoring and screening old films.

The event in Glendale, a Los Angeles suburb, drew 1,000 enthusiastic guests and "was kept under wraps until the last minute in an effort to circumvent some of the anti-Nazi protests that usually occur at her appearances," The Los Angeles Times reported.

The ploy succeeded, though the Times noted that Riefenstahl's presence "was expected to generate outrage among Los Angeles' Jewish community."

That outrage was expressed at the award ceremony by cinephile Bob Gelfand. Raising his voice above the applause for the honoree, Gelfand shouted, "Shame, shame on you."

He later told a reporter, "If I had known this festival was going to honor the Nazi war machine, I would not have come."

The following day, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, strongly criticized the award.

'An unindicted co-conspirator'

"Hitler personally picked Riefenstahl to produce 'Triumph of the Will,' and we actually use segments of the film at our Museum of Tolerance to illustrate how the German people were sold on the Nazi regime," he said in a phone interview.

"Without the Riefenstahls of the world in the 1930s, the Shoah might not have happened.

"I would consider her an unindicted co-conspirator," Cooper added.

Attempts to rehabilitate Riefenstahl fit into a larger pattern emerging in Europe to whitewash the past and recast history, said Cooper.

As an example, he pointed to the recent book by Italian historian Fabio Andriola, "Mussolini: Hitler's Secret Enemy," that seeks to portray the Italian dictator as an opponent of the Fuhrer and Germany.

Cooper also pointed to the retrospective of Riefenstahl's work in the Hamburg art gallery, which opened Aug. 19.

In a story on the exhibit, The New York Times reported that German officials absented themselves from the opening.

In addition, protesters picketed the exhibit.

"Despite Riefenstahl's proclamations that she was merely an artist, the Germans know exactly what the implications of this award are," said Cooper.

The Los Angeles Times followed up its initial story with a lengthy report on Jewish reaction to the award.

One response came from Israel Bick, who manned a stand of movie memorabilia at the festival.

"You can't separate her art from her," Bick said. "In the camps, the artists weren't treated any differently. They burned the artists up with all the others."

British producer Arnold Schwartzman, who has won an Oscar for his documentary "Genocide" and lives in Los Angeles, said he was "rather saddened about what took place. It seems rather sneaky the way they did it, knowing there would be protests. Obviously, there was some hidden agenda here."

Kevin John Charbeneau, Cinecon's president, said his group was not honoring Riefenstahl for political reasons.

"She is an artist first and foremost. That is what we are celebrating.

"I can understand people are going to be upset, but she was not the head of Germany. She was not Hitler," Charbeneau added.

Charbeneau stepped down from his post this week, but it was unclear whether the move was a result of the Riefenstahl flap.

Charbeneau denied it was, saying he decided not to run for re-election because he had no time.

But another former president, Mike Schlesinger, was quoted as saying that Charbeneau had "fallen on his sword."

For her part, the German filmmaker declined to speak to reporters.

Riefenstahl spent three years after World War II in American and French detention camps as a Nazi sympathizer and underwent a "denazification" process.

In interviews, she has consistently cast herself as a dedicated artist, too wrapped up in her work to realize the crimes of the Nazi regime.

Despite her proximity to Hitler and top Nazis, she has claimed absolute ignorance of the Holocaust, saying, "I did not know what was going on. I did not know anything about these things."

In other interviews, according to The New York Times, Riefenstahl insisted that she had "never uttered an anti-Semitic phrase and was never a racist."

And, reflecting on her career, she observed, "I absolutely cannot imagine that I did something unjust. What crime did I commit?" □

Israel not invited to Diana's funeral

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Some infighting among Israeli officials regarding who would attend Princess Diana's funeral Saturday has apparently been a waste of time.

The British Foreign Ministry announced that VIP invitations are being extended only to people who knew the princess personally, to representatives of countries she visited or to charitable organizations with which she was associated.

Exceptions were to be made for members of the British Commonwealth.

A spokesperson for the British Embassy stated that Israel, "like many other countries," fits into none of these categories, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who sent his condolences immediately after Diana's death, was prepared to dispatch his wife, Sara, to the princess' funeral, Ha'aretz reported.

A potential dispute was in the making, the paper added, when officials at the president's office said that President Ezer Weizman should attend. □