



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel blames American pressure

Israeli officials blamed American pressure for the collapse of a meeting on the peace process planned for Monday in Washington.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, who called off the summit after holding separate weekend meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, was expected to consult with American officials about the possibility of rescheduling the meeting. [Page 4]

### Clinton, Netanyahu to meet?

President Clinton is planning to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu next week in Birmingham, England, during a conference of the world's leading industrialized nations, according to Israel Radio. A White House spokesman was reported as saying that Clinton would decide whether to hold the meeting after talking with his advisers.

### First lady gets Iranian kudos

An Iranian newspaper applauded U.S. first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton for comments she made last week advocating a Palestinian state. Clinton's "soothing words" were based on "humanity and compassion," the Tehran Times wrote. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was reportedly incensed by the remarks and protested them during a meeting with U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross.

### Arab Americans cheer Clinton

President Clinton told a group of Arab Americans that his administration is trying to get Israel and the Palestinians "over a hurdle" to get the peace process back on track. Clinton received a long, standing ovation from the Arab American Institute, where he became the first sitting president to address an Arab American group. [Page 4]

### Palestinians plan mass march

Palestinian officials are planning a march Thursday to remember what they call "al-nakba," Arabic for "the catastrophe" caused by the creation of the Jewish state on May 14, 1948.

The Palestinian Authority hopes that 1 million people will march and wear pinned to their shirts the names of Arab villages destroyed since Israel gained statehood.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Impending extradition forces Croatia to grapple with its past

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The expected extradition and war crimes trial of a Croatian World War II fascist are putting contemporary Croatia's claim of democracy firmly on the line.

Dinko Sakic, now 76, who has lived in Argentina for half a century, was arrested last month after he reminisced on Argentine television about his years as commander of Croatia's notorious wartime concentration camp at Jasenovac.

An estimated 500,000 people were tortured and killed at Jasenovac, the "Auschwitz of the Balkans."

The great majority were Serbs, but victims also included Jews, Gypsies and anti-fascist Croats.

But unlike most wartime camps, Jasenovac, south of Zagreb, was not run by the Nazis.

It was run by homegrown Croatian fascists, called Ustashe, who ruled Croatia as a nominally independent Nazi puppet state from 1941 to 1945.

Sakic, who was transferred last week to a prison in Buenos Aires, is expected to be deported any day.

He has admitted to being the commander of Jasenovac, but has contended that he is not guilty of any war crimes.

Sources in Buenos Aires say Sakic's extradition was carefully arranged through his lawyers.

"When he was exposed on local television, he knew his time was up," a police source said. "He vanished to have time to negotiate: He wanted to go to Croatia and not Yugoslavia."

The Argentine judge in charge of the case, Hernan Bernasconi, ordered that Sakic be deported to Croatia, citing that the "alleged crimes were committed in what is today Croatian territory."

The Sakic case has had a searing effect on public opinion in Croatia, where President Franjo Tudjman has used a calculated ambivalence toward wartime Croatia to foster Croatian nationalism.

The case has opened the door to a painful re-examination of Croatia's past, both in light of World War II history and in light of the nationalist passions fanned over the past decade with the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia.

"Trying Sakic will be a good test of Tudjman's government to show a real anti-fascist identity, and it will be a test for Croatian democracy," Ivo Goldstein, a professor of Croatian history at the University of Zagreb, said in a recent telephone interview.

"The state must show that it can organize a fair trial based on fundamental, civic principles," he said.

"It must show that any crime, for whatever goal, must be condemned. This is a clear message that has to be sent to Croatian society and to the world itself," Goldstein added.

Although most Croats do not hold active neo-fascist sympathies, the country is sharply divided on the issue.

A noisy and aggressive right-wing minority brands the Sakic trial "anti-Croatian." The tiny Jewish community, which has taken a public stand that Sakic should be

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Cabinet mulls new IDF head

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai asked the Cabinet to approve Maj. Gen. Shaul Mofaz as the next army chief of staff. The Cabinet is expected to approve the nomination Tuesday. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was said to have favored another candidate, Maj. Gen. Matan Vilnai, who preceded Mofaz as deputy chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force.

### Extremist held over Rabin photo

An Israeli court extended by three days the detention of an extreme right-wing activist suspected of involvement in the distribution of a nude photo composite of the late Yitzhak Rabin.

Itamar Ben Gvir was arrested after police gathered evidence linking him to the appearance last week of the photograph at the Jerusalem offices of Dor Shalom, a peace movement founded by Rabin's son, Yuval, following the 1995 assassination of the prime minister.

### Israeli claims Auschwitz land

An Israeli woman who lost relatives in the Holocaust claims that her family owns part of the land under the Auschwitz death camp, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Tzipora Frank told the newspaper that her grandfather had a tar factory at the site and that its ovens were later used by the death camp.

### Transsexual wins song contest

An Israeli transsexual won Europe's annual Eurovision song contest.

Dana International, who was born Yaron Cohen and underwent a sex change operation four years ago in London, said she hoped the victory would help broaden her appeal. Fervently Orthodox Jews in Israel had protested her selection to represent their country in its jubilee year.



## Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*  
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brought back for a fair trial, has been inundated by phone calls. Some have accused Jews of engineering Sakic's arrest; others have expressed support for the process. "Reaction shows the division between an extremist chauvinist view and one attached to liberal values," Goldstein said.

A prominent member of the Jewish community, Goldstein this spring was the focus of an anti-Semitic media campaign.

But, demonstrating the split in society, he said, these slurs were themselves attacked by prominent non-Jewish Croatians and mainstream organizations.

Present-day Croatia, which seceded from Yugoslavia to become independent in 1991, has both a fascist and a fiercely anti-fascist political legacy.

Many Croatians — including Tudjman himself — fought as anti-fascist partisans in the communist resistance movement led by Marshal Tito, who ruled postwar Yugoslavia until his death in 1980.

In Tito's Communist Yugoslavia, where nationalism was often equated with fascism, Jasenovac was made a symbol of the atrocities of the Nazis and the Ustashe.

A huge monument in the shape of a flower was erected there as a national shrine.

But in his drive to win Croatian independence and to assert a specific Croatian national identity, Tudjman sacrificed the memory of Ustashe atrocities and persecutions. Instead, he invoked a positive image of the wartime Ustashe state as a brave Croatian entity struggling for nationhood.

Some aging Ustashe members who had fled the country after 1945 returned to support the drive for statehood and became part of the Tudjman regime.

The Yugoslav wars and bitter ethnic conflicts between Serbs and Croats in the 1990s exacerbated the issue.

Symbols and even personalities of the fascist state — the only other time in history Croatia has nominally been independent — were incorporated into Croatia's political fabric.

Streets and squares were renamed and anti-fascist monuments were destroyed. Church services were held in honor of Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic, and Pavelic's picture was hung on the walls of some cafes and bars.

Some 1,500 people gathered in the Croatian capital of Zagreb on Saturday to commemorate the Allied victory over fascism in Europe.

The crowd, made up mainly of former anti-fascist fighters during World War II, also called on the government to rename a central square to honor the victims of fascism.

The demonstrators called for the return of the name, the "Victims of Fascism Square," to the place from which where thousands of people were deported to Jasenovac and other death camps. The name was changed to "Square of Great Croatians" in 1991.

Tudjman, meanwhile, has campaigned for what he termed a "reconciliation" between fascism and anti-fascism.

He went so far as to propose that Jasenovac be turned into a memorial to victims not just of fascism, but of communism and of the 1991 Serbo-Croat war.

The memorial, he said, would be "a tribute to all the victims" on Croatia's "way to independence and sovereignty" and that it would reconcile "the dead as well as the living, their children and grandchildren."

The Sakic trial could blow attempts to rewrite history sky-high, and the effects of the process could be far-reaching.

"How do you reconcile with the commander of a concentration camp?" asked one western source familiar with the Zagreb scene.

"Over the last eight years," said Goldstein, "Croatia has lost its anti-fascist identity."

"The Sakic trial," he said, "will show people that the Ustashe were not just good Croats."

Issues raised by the trial, he said, go far beyond the attitude to the wartime state of Croatia.

They are "closely linked," Goldstein said, "with the whole panorama of democratic values — free press, the equality of all citizens and attitudes to Jews and other minorities." □

(JTA correspondent Sergio Kiernan in Buenos Aires contributed to this report.)

## JEWISH WORLD

### Allied victory remembered

Some 1,500 people gathered in the Croatian capital of Zagreb to commemorate the Allied victory over fascism in Europe. The crowd, made up mainly of World War II-era anti-fascist fighters, also called on the government to rename a central square to honor the victims of fascism.

The rally came as Argentina appeared to be ready to accede to Croatia's request to extradite a former concentration camp commander to stand trial for war crimes.

Meanwhile, officials in Belgium and Austria remembered the victims of the Nazis during ceremonies marking the end of World War II in Europe.

In Belgium, King Albert took part in a ceremony organized by the Jewish community to honor the 25,000 Belgian Jews exterminated by the Nazis.

In Austria, government ministers visited three concentration camps to remember the victims and to warn against racism.

### Machal resolution introduced

A resolution honoring the foreign volunteers who served in Israel's 1948 War of Independence was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. The resolution says that the international corps of volunteers, known as Machal, included 1,500 Americans, 400 Canadians, 700 South Africans, 600 Britons and contingents from 33 other countries. Of them, 119 were killed in action.

### Kohl evokes Holocaust

The memory of the Holocaust will always affect Germany's relationship toward Israel, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said at a Berlin ceremony marking Israel's jubilee.

Kohl added that the memory of Israel's founding is inextricably tied to the memory of the crimes committed against Jews during the Holocaust.

He also said that Germans must not and do not want to forget the barbarism of the Nazis and the unspeakable suffering of their victims.

### Jewish man sues Canadian navy

A Canadian man brought suit against the country's navy for refusing him a posting during the 1991 Persian Gulf War because he is Jewish.

Lawyers for reserve Lt. Andrew Liebmann argued that the Canadian armed forces policy of excluding various ethnic minorities from certain combat areas violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

They also asserted that the Canadian navy did not attempt to make a serious determination of whether Jews actually posed a special risk or faced special danger while on active duty in an Islamic country.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Will Palestinians declare independent state next year?

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — As Israel celebrated its 50th anniversary, Yasser Arafat vowed that in a year the Palestinians would celebrate their own independence.

The chairman of the Palestinian Authority reiterated publicly that on May 4, 1999, the state of Palestine would be proclaimed — with or without Israel's consent.

In response, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his warning that if the Palestinians declared independence unilaterally, Israel, too, would take one-sided measures — a veiled threat that it would annex disputed territories in the West Bank.

Amid the rhetoric stands the reality that time is running out on the Oslo process. According to the Israeli-Palestinian accords, a permanent-status agreement is supposed to be finalized by next May. What happens after that date if no agreement is reached has been a matter of dispute.

According to the Palestinians, they have the legal right to declare independence when the Oslo timetable expires.

But an Israeli attorney who was a key figure in negotiating the Oslo accords disagrees. Yoel Singer, former legal adviser to the Israeli delegation in the peace negotiations, pointed out that the Palestinians were ignoring a clause which states that no party would unilaterally introduce changes in the status quo in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Whether the Palestinians could and would declare an independent state without an agreement with Israel strikes emotions on both sides.

But at least one scholar said the question of Palestinian statehood is moot because the Palestine National Council already declared independence in 1988.

"I don't see much of a difference between that declaration of independence, and a possible declaration next year, except for the fact that now they are here," said Barry Rubin, senior resident scholar at Bar-Ilan University's Begin/Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

Having established self-rule in most of the Gaza Strip and portions of the West Bank, a Palestinian state is, in fact, in the making. Even hard-liners in the Israeli Cabinet, such as Ariel Sharon, believe that an independent Palestinian state is unavoidable.

The notion of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state strikes fear in the hearts of many Israelis, though an increasing number are resigned to accepting such an entity. But, if it will happen, the Israeli government wants the state to result from final-status talks, which have not yet begun and, therefore, could continue beyond May 1999.

In the meantime, what the world's reaction to a unilateral declaration of independence is in doubt.

During a visit to Bonn last month, Arafat was told by German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel that a unilateral declaration of independence could make the situation "more and more critical." Rubin said such a move could be a public relations disaster because the "government of Israel could blame Arafat for having walked away" from Oslo, and that, therefore, "Israel has absolutely no obligation toward the Palestinians."

To some Israeli and Palestinian observers, however, Arafat's repeated pronouncements on statehood amount to posturing in the course of peace negotiations.

"I do not believe that Arafat's declaration that he would take a unilateral step was serious," said Sa'id Zeidani, dean of the faculty of arts at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. "Arafat knows that Israel's reaction will be hard. The very least it would do would be to put a siege on the new state and impose economic sanctions against it."

Yair Hirschfeld, of Haifa University's department of Middle Eastern studies, said a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence could still be avoided.

"Much depends on the progress in the peace talks," said Hirschfeld, who was one of the key academic figures in talks that led to the first Oslo accord. "If there is sufficient progress, Arafat may extend the interim period for a year or two and refrain from taking provocative measures." □

**NEWS ANALYSIS****Palestinians on sidelines of U.S.-Israeli negotiations***By Mitchell Danow*

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Israeli-Palestinian peace process appears to hinge on Israeli-American negotiations.

And those negotiations lately seem to have had some of the acrimony that for more than a year has characterized talks involving the Israelis and Palestinians.

In one sign of that acrimony, Israeli officials blamed American pressure for the collapse of a meeting on the peace process planned for Monday in Washington.

During a series of meetings last week in London, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright issued invitations to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to attend the meeting — but on the condition that both sides accepted an American proposal to advance the deadlocked peace process.

With the Palestinians accepting the U.S. proposal, all eyes turned to Israel to see whether it, too, would acquiesce to the American ideas, which call on the Jewish state to redeploy from an additional 13 percent of the West Bank in exchange for Palestinian steps against terror. But in the eyes of Israeli officials — and to a majority of the Israeli public, according to a poll — the invitation to Washington read like an ultimatum.

Netanyahu has repeatedly stated in recent days that he would not accept any dictates or conditions relating to the Washington meeting and that Israel alone would determine its security needs.

Netanyahu met with U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross over the weekend in an effort to see if any last-minute language could be worked out to enable the Washington meeting to proceed.

But those discussions — or negotiations — broke down, and Ross called off the summit on Sunday. Ross did not speak to reporters before leaving for Washington, but other U.S. officials said he would consult with President Clinton and Albright about the possibility of rescheduling the summit later this month.

While the summit has been scrubbed for now, Netanyahu was still planing to come to the United States later this week to address the annual gatherings of the American Jewish Committee and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

He is also scheduled to lead the annual Israel Day parade in New York, slated for May 17.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials, who also met with Ross during the weekend, blamed Netanyahu for not accepting the American plan. They reiterated warnings of the violence that would ensue if the peace process collapsed entirely.

For months, the Palestinians have been calling on the United States to adopt a more active role in the peace process. And now, some Israeli officials are complaining that their American partners have changed from mediators into active negotiators. Another source of Israeli anger were comments made last week by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton advocating a Palestinian state.

"I think it will be in the long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state," she said via a satellite link-up with Israeli and Arab teen-agers meeting in Switzerland.

U.S. officials were quick to state that the first lady's remarks did not reflect a change in the Clinton administration's policy that

statehood is a matter to be negotiated by the Israelis and Palestinians. But given her timing, and the fact that she spoke at some length on the subject, some observers felt that her comments were not accidental.

Netanyahu was reportedly incensed by the first lady's remarks and protested them during a weekend meeting with Ross.

Netanyahu also reportedly complained during the meeting that the United States was portraying him as an obstacle to peace.

"It's impossible for you to invite me to Washington under such conditions. That's public humiliation," the premier told Ross, according to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, which added that Netanyahu pounded his desk during the conversation.

Along with the first lady's comments on Palestinian statehood, another development was likely to give some Israeli officials pause: President Clinton last week addressed a Washington gathering of the Arab American Institute, where he became the first sitting president to address an Arab American group.

Was this a signal sent from Washington in the face of what it views as Israeli intransigence? If so, then Netanyahu and others in his government may have to start contemplating the price of a complete breakdown in negotiations with the United States. □

**Daughter of Holocaust victim to take on other Swiss banks***By Stewart Ain**New York Jewish Week*

NEW YORK (JTA) — After agreeing to a settlement with Credit Suisse, the daughter of a Holocaust victim who was denied access to her father's accounts now plans to take on other Swiss banks.

The lawyer for Estelle Sapir, 71, of Queens, N.Y., was planing to ask the Claims Resolution Tribunal this week to adjudicate her claims against other Swiss banks that also have stonewalled her attempts to recover her father's money. The tribunal was established to handle claims on dormant accounts in Swiss banks.

"Her claim against the Union Bank of Switzerland is bigger than the one against Credit Suisse," said Sapir's attorney, Edward Fagan.

Fagan would not disclose the amount of the Credit Suisse settlement, but it is believed to be between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

The settlement was the first approved by a federal court involving a plaintiff in the class-action lawsuits filed by Holocaust survivors and the heirs of victims against Swiss banks for allegedly hoarding money deposited by Jews who later perished in the Holocaust. Sapir said she was "exhausted" by the battle to recover her father's money. She said that she doesn't eat and that her weight has dropped from 110 pounds to 65 pounds.

When she receives her settlement check from Credit Suisse, she hopes to move out of her one-room apartment into a larger residence. Sapir's story of being turned away by Credit Suisse when she sought to withdraw her father's money after the war was among the most poignant heard during a Senate banking committee hearing last year.

"They demanded that I give them my father's death certificate," recalled Sapir, 71, who said she could see her father's bank records on the bank officer's desk. "But Hitler didn't give me a death certificate." □