



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 128

Thursday, July 16, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S., Russia coordinate steps

The White House coordinated steps with Russia in an effort to stop nine Russian groups from exporting missile technology to countries such as Iran. The United States imposed trade restrictions on the Russian institutions, including universities, hours after Russian authorities announced an investigation of the same entities.

The U.S. action was an attempt to convince the House of Representatives to postpone a vote scheduled for Friday to override President Clinton's veto of a law that would impose new sanctions on Russian companies involved in missile trade with Iran. The Clinton administration opposes the law in part because it believes the law micromanages foreign policy.

Jewish groups, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which had been pushing the House to override the presidential veto, said they would support a congressional move to postpone the vote. But these same groups were wrestling over whether to back the White House and actually urge a delay.

Shoval replaces Ben-Elissar

Eliahu Ben-Elissar's tenure as Israel's ambassador to the United States ended with his departure for Paris, where he will serve as ambassador to France. His successor, Zalman Shoval, begins his term Thursday. Shoval served in the post under former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Britain allocates \$1.6 million

Britain allocated some \$1.6 million to a fund for needy Holocaust survivors. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said two-thirds of the money would be earmarked to provide medical assistance to survivors in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The remainder will be used to help survivors in Britain. Fourteen countries, including Britain, pledged about \$57 million to the fund, which was announced last December at a conference held in London on Nazi-looted gold.

Israeli-Turkish ties criticized

Greece lashed out at Israeli-Turkish military ties after reports in the Turkish press indicated that the two countries held war games in which they simulated the bombing of sites on the island of Cyprus. The Israeli Embassy in Athens denied the reports. [Page 4]

ELECTION 1998

Questioning what is out of bounds when reaching out to Jewish voters

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — "We think it's important for people to know that Jill Docking is Jewish. Please vote for Sam Brownback."

That is the phone call a handful of Kansas voters say they received in the days before Brownback won his 1996 race for the Senate.

In a world of no-holds-barred campaigns, many political activists fear that the anti-Jewish outreach, although so far rare, could be a harbinger of campaigns to come.

With Election Day less than four months away, 1998 is shaping up to be a bruising battle as Republican candidates seek to retain the slimmest majority in the House of Representatives. A gain of 11 seats would put a Democrat back in the speaker's chair.

With 34 seats in the Senate up for election, Democrats admit they have virtually no chance of regaining control and instead talk of fighting to prevent the GOP from winning a filibuster-proof 60-seat margin or maybe picking up a few seats to position themselves for a 2000 run at the majority.

Many high-profile Jewish candidates, including Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rep. Jon Fox (R-Pa.), who won his last election by fewer than 100 votes, are running for their political lives in races where Jewish issues such as the standoff with Swiss banks over Holocaust assets are already playing a role.

At the same time Republicans, who historically have struggled to attract Jewish support, have launched an unprecedented drive to help their party's candidates reach out to Jewish voters.

Against this backdrop, the Kansas race, though two years old, has emerged as a hot topic on the Jewish campaign scene in light of new details about the incident publicized by a Jewish Democratic group. In all tight races, minority communities take on increased significance and any attack on a candidate's race or religion can swing voters.

This has raised the timeless question of what is in bounds and out of bounds when candidates or their supporters reach out to Jewish — as well as non-Jewish — voters.

"People should be elected because of the positions they take," said Jess Hordes, the Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League. "I do not think a candidate's Jewishness ought to come into play."

As campaigns seem to turn nastier and more personal with each election cycle, activists of all political stripes say that the Kansas race stands out as an example of out-of-bounds election schemes. In the Brownback incident, no evidence has emerged to tie the senator or his campaign to the calls. And the senator and his staff called local Jewish institutions at the time to condemn the effort to besmirch his Jewish opponent.

But other questions arise: Should Brownback, who is up for re-election this year, have publicly condemned and investigated the calls in the waning days of the campaign when Docking herself decided to keep quiet to avoid splashing her Jewishness across the front pages of rural newspapers?

Whether orchestrated by Brownback supporters, as the National Jewish Democratic Council has charged, or by Docking supporters hoping to reap an anti-Brownback backlash, as some Republicans charge, the calls reflect, political analysts believe, a re-emergence of anti-Jewish campaign tactics that have not been seen in 20 years.

And the controversy shows no sign of waning.

Brownback is up for re-election again this fall because in 1996, he won only a two-year term to serve out Bob Dole's tenure after Dole resigned from the Senate to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Mordechai, premier at odds

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai is reportedly at odds with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over a meeting Mordechai is slated to hold in the coming days with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas.

Netanyahu is reported to be balking at his defense minister's request that he be given the authority to conclude a deal with Abbas that would break the 16-month impasse in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Pollard petition planned

A group of Israeli legislators is planning to present President Clinton with a petition calling for Jonathan Pollard's release, according to a spokesman for Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh.

The announcement came as Pollard's wife, Esther, played a tape before a Knesset committee in which the former U.S. naval intelligence analyst jailed for life on charges of spying for Israel accused the Jewish state of abandoning him while his health deteriorates in a U.S. jail.

Security head visits Israel

The head of Russia's security services is visiting Israel to discuss Jerusalem's demand that Moscow do more to stop the sale of missile technology to Iran.

Nikolai Kovalev will also discuss with his Israeli hosts joint efforts to combat crime and terrorism, according to a spokesman at the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

Hussein to receive treatment

King Hussein was scheduled to visit the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota this week for treatment of recurring fevers, the monarch told Jordanian television.

Hussein, who was treated for cancer six years ago, usually visits the Mayo Clinic about every six months.

He last visited in May.

challenge President Clinton for the presidency. Already, Brownback's expected opponent, Paul Feleciano, who is not Jewish, has revived the Docking incident to charge that the senator or his campaign used an anti-Semitic tactic.

Despite the lack of evidence tying Brownback to the 1996 incident, the National Jewish Democratic Council believes it is fair game to use the incident against him.

Ira Forman, executive director of NJDC, when asked if using the incident against Brownback was out of bounds, said, "No. Not by campaign standards today." NJDC last month published a report on the Kansas incident that stopped short of tying Brownback to the calls.

To the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group that is quick to point out that NJDC's political action committee gave Docking \$9,150, that strategy is no better than the anti-Semitic calls. "This is the worst kind of gutter politics," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition.

As Democrats and Republicans continue to bicker over what's fair play in an election season, most agree that future Jewish candidates are likely to face similar tactics unless those responsible are exposed and publicly condemned.

But if history is any lesson, even if there is exposure, there are no guarantees that the methods will stop. Political consultant Arthur Finkelstein has the dubious distinction of being the first to test whether voters respond negatively to Jewish candidates.

Finkelstein, a much sought-after Jewish pollster who crafted the image that is credited with helping Benjamin Netanyahu become Israel's prime minister, conducted a poll in 1978 on behalf of Carroll Campbell Jr. in a South Carolina congressional race.

Using a question widely seen as anti-Jewish, Finkelstein wanted to see whether the fact that Campbell's opponent, Max Heller, was Jewish would affect voters.

After Heller's religion became an issue with the help of a third party candidate — who pointed out in a debate that "Heller doesn't believe in Jesus Christ" — Campbell's polling numbers improved and he went on to win the House seat.

In the Kansas case, a similar strategy may have been doomed from the start, say local activists. Many of the known phone calls were made in an area that had already elected Dan Glickman, a Jewish member of Congress who represented the district until he became President Clinton's secretary of agriculture.

The Brownback incident aside, most campaigns involving Jewish candidates never touch directly on a candidate's Jewishness. Instead there are more veiled attacks on a candidate's position on foreign aid and Israel, hinting at charges of dual loyalty.

Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.), for example, came under fire at a 1992 debate for being a better friend of the Golan Heights than the local heights in his district. He was also accused of speaking Hebrew instead of Spanish, the language of many of his constituents.

But difficulty arises when religion intersects with policy.

"If one is identified with a particular religious viewpoint it may be appropriate at some point" to raise questions, Hordes said.

With Southern Baptists moving forward with plans to convert Jews, questions could come from Jewish audiences to measure their support for the effort.

But others disagree, believing that religion should be left out of the debate unless the candidate raises the issue.

"A politician does have a public and a private life. Religion is part of the private life," said Frank Luntz, a prominent Republican political consultant.

But that does not mean that issues that touch on religious belief are out of bounds for debate, said Luntz, who has created for the National Jewish Coalition 25 pages of guidelines to teach Republican candidates how to talk to Jewish voters.

Using the findings from focus groups, the Republican Jewish group is asking candidates to address Jews on a wide range of issues, from Israel to abortion.

Jews want moral issues "stripped of any overtly religious references," according to the summary of the talking points provided by NJC. The statement, "Communicating Republican Policy to Jewish Americans" urges candidates to express support for Israel as a friend, not an ally, because "allies come and go but friendship lasts forever."

The strategy also looks to the presidential race in 2000, urging candidates to play upon what their testing found to be current Jewish concerns about the Clinton administration's pressure on Israel. □



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*
 Kenneth Bandler, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

Boro Park residents hail acquittal of local lawmaker

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — More than 200 Chasidim erupted in applause and cheers this week as Dov Hikind, newly acquitted of federal bribery charges, emerged from his office on Boro Park's main thoroughfare.

With one arm slung around his lawyer's shoulders and the other around his wife, the New York state assemblyman, representing the largely Chasidic Brooklyn neighborhood, descended from his second-floor district office to declare: "God was on our side."

Hikind's words Tuesday came one day after he was found not guilty of federal charges that he had used government-provided money, funneled through Boro Park's Council of Jewish Organizations, to pay for personal expenses, including his children's yeshiva tuition and family vacations in Paris and Israel.

As supporters pressed up close at the rally under the bright July sun, Hikind thanked his lawyers, family and community members for supporting him throughout the experience.

He said he is planning to run for another office, which he refused to name but is widely believed to be the congressional seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer.

At the rally, held outside Amnon's Kosher Pizza Shop — which had handwritten signs taped to its front proclaiming its customers' faith in their state assemblyman — Hikind also vowed to recreate the Brooklyn neighborhood's Council of Jewish Organizations.

The council had been the area's most important social service agency and had received millions of dollars in federal, state and local aid for job training, youth and senior services as well as assistance to immigrants.

But it was effectively put out of business when two of its senior officials were indicted last year.

Boro Park is peopled with Orthodox Jews, including Chasidim connected with the Bobov, Gerrer, Breslov, Muncatcz and several other sects.

Hikind and Rabbi Elimelech Naiman, who managed COJO, were both charged last year with diverting some \$45,000 in taxpayer funds to their own pockets over a period of six years.

Paul Chernik, COJO's director of operations, pleaded guilty to fraud last year, saying he paid "a reward" to Hikind for helping the group.

Chernik awaits sentencing.

Naiman, who was on trial with Hikind, was found guilty Monday of misapplying the funds and of bribery.

Observers of the legal proceedings said the seemingly contradictory conclusion reached by the jury was most likely based on what the jury members viewed as each defendant's intent.

Naiman, the observers said, was convicted because he intended to bribe Hikind. The assemblyman was not, apparently because the jury found that he did not intend to provide favors to COJO in exchange for the gifts.

The Jews of Boro Park hailed the acquittal of the lawmaker who they say knows how to take care of them.

"Nothing gets done around here without him," said Ephraim Landau, 28, a lifelong resident of the neighborhood who heads the Boro Park Shomrim Safety Patrol, a group that guards the area against crime.

Isaac Hager, a 60-something man snapping photos of Hikind's triumphant return, explained the assemblyman's importance to the neighborhood by relating a story from his own life.

Hager, who described himself as a semi-retired producer of Chasidic music, said his daughter was having trouble retrieving her belongings from a shipping company when she moved back to the United States from Israel.

"I called Hikind," Hager said.

"He made a couple of calls and like that," he continued, snapping his fingers, "her things were right at her front door the next day." □

Florida may impose sanctions

Florida may cancel its loan contracts with Switzerland's two largest private banks if they do not settle claims of Holocaust victims, a state insurance official said. The banks face similar sanctions in New York and other states.

French Jews plan protest

Holocaust survivors were planning to demonstrate Thursday outside the Syrian Embassy in Paris to coincide with a visit to France by Syrian President Hafez Assad.

The protesters want to press their demand that Assad extradite former Nazi S.S. officer Alois Brunner, accused of responsibility for the deaths of more than 100,000 Jews across Europe during World War II. Meanwhile, Assad denied during an interview broadcast on French television that Syria had given Brunner refuge.

Swiss speaks out on gold accord

A Swiss legislator said his government should renegotiate the 1946 Washington Agreement, under which Switzerland returned to the Allies a portion of the gold it received from Nazi Germany.

Switzerland did not reveal the true total of the Nazi-looted gold it purchased and "therefore we still owe more money," said Jean Ziegler. The lawmaker said he would participate in hearings slated for next week in Washington on whether to reopen negotiations on the 1946 accord. Representatives of private Swiss banks have stated they will not attend the Senate hearings.

Official urges global data base

Washington state's insurance commissioner urged families of Holocaust victims to use a global computer data base to help track down relatives who may have left unclaimed insurance policies dating back to the Holocaust era.

The value of such policies could total billions of dollars, Deborah Senn said in Los Angeles at the convention of the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies.

Senn heads a national task force of state insurance commissioners that has been putting pressure on European insurance companies to open their books on Holocaust-era policies.

Claim settled against Swiss bank

An Australian lawyer said he successfully settled a claim for a Holocaust-era deposit held in a dormant Swiss bank account. Henry Burstynier reached a confidential settlement — believed to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars — for a Melbourne client and his sisters in Europe and South America.

New school envisions classrooms both sides of Jordan, Israel border

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Not too long ago, the idea would have been unthinkable: A student walking into a university in Israel and exiting into Jordan.

Now that promises to become a reality, with plans under way to develop a joint Israeli-Jordanian university extending on both sides of the border between the two countries.

Seeking to enhance the cause of peace and the prospects for economic development in the area, Touro College, a Jewish-sponsored institution of higher education based in the United States, announced this week that it is working with the two governments to develop a school of business and agriculture in the Central Arava, a region located between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea.

"Establishing an educational institution in a no-man's-land between Israel and Jordan" is "a kind of historic event in the building of close relations between two brothers and two neighbors," said Bernard Lander, president of Touro College, which has 10,000 students enrolled on its campuses in New York, California, Israel and Russia.

The project aims to fill a void in economic development in the Central Arava.

It has been endorsed by Israel's infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, and Jordan's minister of water and irrigation, Munther Haddadin.

A largely desolate area with populations of less than 2,500 on each side of the border, the Central Arava has failed to keep pace with the scientific, technological and economic advances in other parts of Israel and Jordan.

Supporters of the project say it will help serve the needs of the region by establishing an academically rich and culturally diverse community that can function as a source of skilled manpower and innovative agricultural and industrial research.

"Just visualize what could be achieved if on both sides of the border, this hot desert could bloom," Lander said.

"Thousands of individuals could bring prosperity to Jordan and to Israel."

Beyond its practical impact, supporters also believe the project can help strengthen the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty.

"The more we will have joint ventures of this kind, the more peace in the Middle East will be enhanced," said Eliahu Ben-Elissar, who helped unveil the Touro project as one of his last acts as Israel's ambassador to the United States.

"Experience has shown that there is a direct correlation between the two," he said.

Ben-Elissar departed this week for France where he will be Israel's new ambassador.

Jordan, too, welcomed the proposal.

Rania Atallah, the first secretary at the Jordanian Embassy in Washington, said she hopes it will "bring real cooperation and results not only to the parties concerned in Jordan and Israel but also to the entire region."

Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), who hosted a Capitol Hill news conference Tuesday to announce the project, said he hoped the process of establishing the new school, and the benefits expected to flow from it, "will help to open new doors leading to

expanded trade and other links between Jordan and Israel."

Lander said the college intends to pursue U.S. governmental and private foundation support to help fund the project, with hopes of opening the campus in September 1999. □

Greece warily watches growing Israeli-Turkish military relations

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS (JTA) — Israel's growing military links with Turkey may have a distinct downside.

Israeli officials have welcomed the bilateral military agreements reached with Turkey during the past year, seeing Ankara as a strong potential ally in a largely hostile Arab world.

But Israel's links with Ankara have the potential to embroil the Jewish state in the decades-old tensions between two traditional foes, Greece and Turkey, over the divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

Greek officials, like many in the Arab world, have cast a distrustful eye on recent military agreements between Israel and Turkey.

The accords include weapons deals and agreements for joint military exercises.

This week the Athens government found a new reason to criticize those agreements.

A government spokesman based the criticisms on reports in the Turkish press regarding an exercise involving six Turkish planes at an Israeli air base.

The scenario for the exercise reportedly involved air strikes in Cyprus if Russia proceeded with plans to install its S-300 anti-aircraft missiles on the island.

The spokesman, Dimitris Reppas, said Monday that if the reports were true, it proved that the Israeli-Turkish alliance was a destabilizing influence in the eastern Mediterranean.

A senior Israel Air Force commander was recently quoted in an Israeli news report as confirming that Turkish fighter jets were training in the Negev, but declined to say what the exercises involved.

The Israeli Embassy in Athens, however, denied the Turkish news reports.

The Jewish state's "cooperation with countries in the region is not directed against third parties and certainly not against Greece and Cyprus," the embassy said in a statement.

Even as the embassy was issuing the statement, Turkish military sources announced that Ankara had decided to increase the number of its military attaches in Israel from one to three.

Compounding Greek fears, Russian and Cypriot officials said Monday they were prepared to implement an agreement to deploy the Russian-made S-300 missiles on Cyprus.

While criticizing in recent months the Israeli-Turkish military partnership, Greece had its own chance to establish similar ties with Israel in 1993.

During a visit to Israel at the time, Athens' then-defense minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, received from his hosts a 10-page proposal that called for joint military maneuvers, intelligence sharing and cooperation between the Israeli and Greek defense industries.

For reasons never disclosed by the Greek government, the proposal was rejected. □