



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 138

Thursday, July 30, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Knesset passes bill

The Israeli Knesset gave preliminary approval to a bill calling for new elections. Most members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition boycotted the vote. In order to take effect, the bill has to pass three additional votes. [Page 4]

Lawmaker offends Moroccans

Likud Knesset members sharply criticized comments by a Labor legislator in which he offended Moroccan Jews. Ori Orr was quoted in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz as saying that Moroccan Jews are the "most problematic ethnic group." Orr added that Moroccan Jews in Israel "have no curiosity to know what's happening" and that they interpret legitimate criticism as ethnically motivated. Orr later apologized for his remarks. [Page 4]

Russian firms face penalties

President Clinton signed an executive order that penalizes seven Russian companies and institutions accused of selling missile technology to Iran. The move, which was coordinated with Russia, bars the seven enterprises from exporting goods to the United States and also prevents them from receiving U.S. aid. The Clinton administration is considering imposing the same penalties against two other Russian firms.

No options for U.S.

The United States does not have the option of withdrawing from the peace process, America's top Middle Eastern diplomat told the House of Representatives International Relations Committee. Martin Indyk, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, told lawmakers that "it may be necessary to take a timeout from the peace process if we cannot bring this particular effort to a successful conclusion." When asked about a French-Egyptian proposal for an international peace conference, Indyk said the United States opposes such an idea, but that it would be difficult to resist if the peace talks break down.

Vandals deface statue

Vandals destroyed a bronze statue depicting survivors at the Buchenwald concentration camp. The attack is believed to be the first attack on a concentration camp memorial in Germany. Police said there were no suspects. [Page 2]

With Kraar out of running, CJF, UJA seek new leader

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Martin Kraar, the top professional at the Council of Jewish Federations, is leaving the new CJF-United Jewish Appeal partnership to take over as executive vice president of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Kraar's decision to leave CJF after 10 years as its chief executive and an influential force in the partnership's creation was both personal and professional.

"I really believe it's time for me to make a change," he said in an interview, adding that as CJF, UJA and the United Israel Appeal finalize their merger, one of the most important decisions they will make is to decide on a new executive.

Kraar's departure puts to rest months of speculation about his future, but leaves open the question of who will lead the newly formed entity.

Together, CJF, UJA and UIA — which recently set up shop together in a lower-Manhattan building under the banner "UJA Federations of North America" — represent the major fund-raising organization and service provider to American Jews and Jewish communities worldwide, raising an estimated \$1.4 billion a year.

Their merger will create the largest Jewish governing body in North America and for the first time will consolidate power in one office.

Its leader will be responsible for everything from fund raising to community relations to budgets, according to Richard Pearlstone of Aspen, Colo., a former UJA national chairman and a co-chair of the 25-member committee charged with finding a professional leader to take the helm of the consolidated body.

Kraar sent a letter to the CJF last month removing himself from the selection process. CJF President Dr. Conrad Giles of Detroit said he was saddened, but not surprised by Kraar's decision. "I have been aware that Marty was considering other options for the past year," he said.

Kraar's recent tenure has been consumed with plans for what has lately been called "the road to merger." By all accounts, it has been a rocky road, with many pitfalls and plenty of ups and downs.

Earlier attempts at a merger failed, and the current "partnership" has had many incarnations. Most recently, some 125 leaders from local federations and the key partnership constituencies convened in Chicago to lay down the groundwork for the merger, which is now scheduled to be finalized by next April.

A memorandum from that meeting has been circulated to 180 federations in North America to elicit reactions to proposed initiatives, such as giving local federations a greater stake, or "ownership," in the partnership and wider representation in governance and decision-making. With local federations gaining a majority voice in the new entity, however, the exact role of its future executive is not yet clear.

Rumors about the position's prime candidates have circulated since plans for a CJF-UJA partnership first surfaced.

The names most often mentioned come from the top tiers of America's largest federations. They include Steven Nasatir, president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago; Robert Aronson, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit; and Stephen Solender, executive vice president of New York's UJA-Federation.

Choosing one of them is considered a more likely scenario than giving the post — the exact title of which has yet to be determined — to Bernard Moscovitz, executive

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hussein makes announcement

Jordan's King Hussein told his country for the first time that he is suffering from lymphatic cancer. Speaking on Jordanian television by satellite from Minnesota, Hussein said he began a round of chemotherapy Sunday. A statement released by the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., said the results of the king's first cycle of treatments were encouraging.

France, Egypt agree

France and Egypt agreed to set up a working group to promote a proposed international conference to jump-start the Middle East peace talks.

Israel has long opposed the idea of countries other than the United States being directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Talks continue on Middle East

No breakthrough was reported in the ongoing discussions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the U.S. proposal regarding a further Israeli redeployment from the West Bank.

But the two sides agreed that the talks would continue.

Arafat to visit Turkey

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat is scheduled to visit Turkey on Friday to discuss the stalled Middle East peace process. Turkey and Israel have increased defense ties during the past few years.

Arab League makes offer

The Arab League offered to handle security and travel for two Libyan suspects if they are tried in the Netherlands for the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland.

U.S. and British officials had long demanded that the trial take place in the United States or Britain, but said recently they were considering a trial in another country.

vice president of UJA. But another option is bringing in a high-profile individual from outside the federated system. One such name bandied about has been Rudy Boschwitz, the former Republican senator from Minnesota.

Another name that has surfaced lately is Richard Joel, the dynamic president and international director of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

Search committee members are tight-lipped about front-runners for the job, saying only that they would seek out someone familiar to the federated system and that the search process would be open to all qualified candidates.

The committee, led by Pearlstone and Daniel Shapiro of New York, and to be staffed by Darrell Friedman, president of The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, will hold its first full meeting in New York on Aug. 10 to define a job description and to discuss hiring a search firm to bring in candidates.

Until then, Pearlstone insists, any talk of candidates is sheer speculation. "There are no candidates. We haven't asked for any candidates," he said in a telephone interview. Giles said a new chief professional officer at CJF will take over for Kraar once his date of departure is set.

For his part, Kraar said he planned on "seeing this thing to a logical point."

Giles expressed confidence in the ability of the current team of professionals, which he credits Kraar with assembling for the partnership's final phase.

"One of the measures of the organization he has built will be the success of the institution as it moves forward," Giles said in a telephone interview. □

Vandals damage memorial at concentration camp site

By Deidre Berger

BERLIN (JTA) — The desecration last weekend of a sculpture at Buchenwald comes amid a backdrop of increased attacks on concentration camps in Germany.

During the weekend, unknown assailants damaged the figure of a child by partially sawing through one of its legs. The child represents the 9,000 children who survived Buchenwald. An estimated total of 56,000 people died at the camp, including about 11,000 Jewish victims. The damage to the sculpture, which is located in a different section of the grounds than the main exhibition, was discovered Tuesday by visitors to the site. The sculpture of 11 figures by artist Fritz Cremer, erected in 1958, depicts a group of liberated survivors of Buchenwald.

In a statement, memorial site director Volkhard Knigge said the attack was an attempt to damage and even obliterate the memory of the suffering of Nazi victims.

State authorities said they suspected right-wing extremists were responsible for the attack.

There have been repeated incidents of young right-wing extremists scrawling graffiti or flashing the Hitler salute at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, both of which are in the eastern part of Germany. In the early 1990s, one of the former prisoner barracks at Sachsenhausen burned down in an arson attack by right-wing radicals.

But this is the first time that a memorial for former Nazi prisoners has been damaged, according to Rikola-Gunner Luettgenu, the deputy director of the Buchenwald memorial site.

Earlier this month, police in the state of Brandenburg were asked to stop reporting incidents of right-wing graffiti at concentration camp memorials to the media. Authorities at the memorial fear publicity about such incidents has inspired similar acts in the past. In the past 18 months, at least 12 such acts have been reported at the memorial sites at Sachsenhausen and Ravensbruck.

Buchenwald has a private security service but authorities say the grounds are too large to allow permanent surveillance of the entire site. About half a million visitors each year visit the site, up from approximately 200,000 in the early 1990s.

Despite the growth in visitors, Buchenwald and other former Nazi concentration camp sites in Germany are underfinanced.

Maintenance projects have been postponed, operating hours reduced and some research projects stopped due to financial difficulties. □



Daily News Bulletin

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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.

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JEWISH WORLD

Russia pledges cooperation

Russia's Defense Ministry said it plans to cooperate more closely with the Federal Security Service in order to prevent the unauthorized export of defense technologies, especially missile technology.

A statement issued by the ministry said Russia would not make any exceptions to its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but would continue to develop "traditional technological defense cooperation" with other countries, particularly in the field of conventional weapons.

Croatia asks for Sakic's wife

Croatia officially asked Argentina to extradite the wife of a former Croatian camp commander to stand trial. Esperanza Sakic is alleged to have committed war crimes at the Jasenovac camp during World War II. Her husband, Dinko, was extradited to Croatia in June.

Michigan judge removed

A judge who made anti-Jewish, anti-Arab and anti-black remarks was removed from the Michigan Supreme Court.

Andrea Ferrara had denied the remarks, which were caught on tape by her ex-husband.

The federal judge who ordered her removal said Ferrara was being removed because of her conduct during the investigation.

Vandals hit Polish tombstones

At least 30 Jewish tombstones at a cemetery near Warsaw were damaged last weekend.

The vandals also defaced the tombstone of the speaker of Poland's pre-World War II Parliament.

Artist withdraws design

One of the four finalists in the competition for a proposed Holocaust memorial in Berlin quit.

In withdrawing his design, German artist Jochen Gerz said he doubted the project would ever be built.

The memorial has been plagued by controversy for more than 10 years, most recently when a man who could be cultural affairs minister in Germany's next government said he opposed the memorial.

Jewish leader calls for probe

A German Jewish leader said his government must investigate the disappearance of documents relating to Nazi-looted gold.

Michel Friedmann, a member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said he could not believe that no one knew how the folders, known as the Melmer files, had vanished.

A recent report by Germany's Federal Archives said the files likely disappeared in the 1970s.

Time running out for Congress to pass persecution legislation

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — While efforts to combat religious persecution overseas remain stalled in Congress, some Jewish activists are still holding out hope that legislation targeted at the problem will pass this year.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee dealt a setback to proponents of the campaign against religious persecution last week, when it decided not to consider the International Religious Freedom Act, which seeks to punish foreign countries that persecute religious minorities. Lawmakers pulled the bill from the panel's docket after both Republicans and Democrats on the committee argued that the measure would alienate valuable diplomatic friends and economic partners.

The move, which comes with little time left in this session of Congress, greatly complicates efforts led by religious conservatives — and joined by a broad coalition of Jewish and other religious groups — to push such legislation through the 105th Congress.

The House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a separate version of the bill in May, but it remains unclear whether enough time is left to work out differences between the House and Senate bills.

Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said failure by the Senate to take action to fight religious persecution would be a "significant disappointment."

"I think that in a lot of ways the time is ripe for this legislation," Pelavin said, but added that "quite often important legislation takes a couple of congresses" to pass.

Stacy Burdett, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office, said she sees an imminent need to quickly move the legislation through Congress. "Failure to pass the bill this year would send a dangerous signal to those regimes that oppress worshipers," she said.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) has promised to bring religious persecution legislation to the Senate floor for a vote before Congress adjourns in early October. If a compromise is not found, the Senate may simply vote on the bill that the House already approved.

That legislation, sponsored by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), requires the president to impose automatic economic sanctions against countries engaged in the persecution of religious minorities. Those countries would face a bar to most forms of aid, trade restrictions and American opposition to loans from international financial institutions.

The Senate bill, offered by Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.), takes a less stringent approach. It compels the United States to publish a list of offending countries and allows the president a range of responses, ranging from diplomatic protest to economic sanctions.

The Clinton administration strongly opposes both measures. The White House and the State Department, along with Senate Democrats and some Republicans, argue that the legislation could backfire against religious minorities, hamstring U.S. foreign policy and highlight certain human rights abuses at the expense of others.

A handful of Jewish groups endorsed the Wolf-Specter bill earlier this year, but most now favor the Senate version, which they see as more flexible and potentially effective.

"It really does have a lot of potential for providing the kind of response to religious persecution that's appropriate and that is going to make a clear statement and, at the same time, not interfere with the responsibilities of the president," Richard Foltin, legislative director and counsel for the American Jewish Committee, said of the Senate bill.

The Council of Jewish Federations wants to make sure that the final version of the legislation not only protects the status of other persecuted groups, such as Jewish refugees, currently guaranteed haven in the United States, but that it fixes recent changes in immigration law that have made it harder for refugees to immigrate. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Knesset begins recess amid growing calls for new elections*By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Knesset has cast a dark cloud over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political future.

In a 60-6 vote Wednesday, the Israeli Parliament gave preliminary approval to a bill to dissolve the legislature, forcing new elections ahead of their slated 2000 date.

Observers have called the bill the most serious threat so far to Netanyahu's 2-year-old government, though the measure still faces three additional votes, each of which will require support from at least 61 of the 120 Knesset members. If the bill ultimately passes, new elections for the Knesset and for prime minister will be called.

"Let's see them get 61 votes," Netanyahu said the day before the preliminary vote, which he dismissed as "insignificant."

Just the same, the Knesset ended its summer session in a defeat for the prime minister that seems to augur a politically hot three-month recess rather than the relaxed break that some of the lawmakers, and perhaps Netanyahu himself, might have hoped for.

The move comes amid growing disenchantment from the opposition — and from within the governing coalition — with Netanyahu's handling of the peace process. Indeed, as the Knesset adjourned this week, the long-awaited redeployment accord with the Palestinians remained elusive.

Netanyahu's discomfiture, however, was softened somewhat by a furor that arose before the vote around remarks made by Labor Knesset member Ori Orr, who disparaged Sephardi Jews, Moroccan Jews in particular, in an interview with the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The premier, addressing the Knesset, sought to focus public attention on Orr's remarks and away from the early elections bill. Orr was roundly criticized across the political spectrum.

Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak, who last year publicly apologized for the suffering Jews from Middle Eastern and North African Jews endured in the early years of the state, said it would take a long time to mend the damage Orr had caused the party. Barak immediately kicked Orr off a high-powered Labor delegation that is due to arrive in Washington on Sunday.

While Orr later apologized, the controversy over his remarks momentarily stole the thunder from the opposition's achievement on the Knesset floor.

Netanyahu's efforts in the run-up to Wednesday's vote to persuade coalition rebels not to break ranks failed abysmally. Together with the chief coalition whip, Likud Knesset member Meir Sheetrit, the premier ordered coalition members to stay away from the vote. But three members of the Third Way Party voted for the bill, and the fourth member, Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, made it clear that he, too, supported the measure. His position as a Cabinet member barred Kahalani from voting with the opposition.

Two former members of Netanyahu's Cabinet — David Levy and Dan Meridor — also joined with the opposition.

Levy and three other members of his Geshet Party cited the latest unemployment figures as evidence of the government's failed economic and social policies. Likud Knesset member Meridor, with his vote, signaled for the first time publicly his irrevocable breach with the premier, and, in the view of many observers, his

intention to challenge Netanyahu for the premiership.

Veteran parliamentary observers recalled that when a bill of this kind passed a preliminary vote on previous occasions, representatives of the two main parties would subsequently get together privately and begin looking for a date to hold new elections. Even if those precedents are not repeated this time, this week's vote was important.

In terms of political substance the bill represents for Netanyahu an ominous ad hoc coalescence of the left and right.

Binyamin Alon, of the far-right Moledet Party, for instance, fully intended to join with the left wing, including the Arab parties, in voting to bring Netanyahu down. Only Netanyahu's last-minute decision to boycott the vote prevented this hemorrhaging on his right flank — Moledet's two votes would have brought the total in support of early elections to 62.

Both sides of this anti-Netanyahu front have cited, but for different reasons, his stance in the stalemated peace talks as the justification for seeking to bring him down.

Members of the Yisrael Ba' Aliyah Party, which is headed by Trade and Industry Minister Natan Sharansky, were also contemplating voting for the bill — on the grounds that the premier's oft-repeated promises to conclude an agreement with the Palestinian Authority by the end of the month were melting under the torrid summer sun. But they, too, were saved by the boycott tactic.

On the face of it, the hard-core right could allow itself a satisfied sigh of relief at the passing of the end-of-July deadline without the premier's having concluded the accord with the Palestinians. Netanyahu is understood to have agreed, after months of hesitation and pressure, to the U.S. proposal under which Israel would withdraw from an additional 13 percent of the West Bank in exchange for Palestinian steps to improve security. But there is still argument over the precise conditions under which 3 percent of that total would be turned over to the Palestinian Authority.

At the urging of Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, Israel's position reportedly softened this week, and direct talks with the Palestinian side resumed with a sense that the redeployment issue was nearing resolution. But Netanyahu, despite the urgings of Mordechai and other Cabinet moderates, was still digging in his heels over an Israeli demand that the Palestine National Council, the PLO's parliament-in-exile, be convened to abrogate the anti-Israeli provisions of its charter.

The far right, however, was not prepared to rely too confidently on this last holdout by Netanyahu. As a result, some of its members favored the bill for new elections. The right's distrust of Netanyahu on the redeployment has also prompted the National Religious Party and others in the "Greater Israel caucus" to insist that Netanyahu promise in writing that if he reaches an agreement with the Palestinian Authority during the three-month summer recess, he will bring it before a special session of the Knesset and regard the vote on it as vote of confidence in his government.

But because Knesset rules say there cannot be a confidence vote during the recess, some on the right fear that Netanyahu may deliberately reach a deal with the Palestinians within the next three months, comfortable in the knowledge that the Knesset cannot vote to bring him down. All this hardly reflects an atmosphere of mutual trust among coalition members. While the Netanyahu government is still intact, it's unlikely to be a peaceful summer for the premier as the early election bill's proponents prepare to move forward on the legislation in the fall, when the Knesset reconvenes. □