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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Hard-liners seek end to talks

Israeli hard-line politicians called for an end to negotiations with the Palestinians after two Jewish settlers were shot dead near the West Bank town of Nablus. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Israel Radio that the slayings proved the need for a Palestinian crackdown on militants before the Jewish state agrees to a further West Bank redeployment. [Page 3]

U.S. to press Israel

The United States will continue to press Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to propose concrete ideas in negotiations with the Palestinians, President Clinton's national security adviser told a visiting Labor Party delegation. Opposition leader Ehud Barak, who heads the delegation, has asked the United States to publicly announce the details of its peace plan if Israeli-Palestinian talks break down. The group is scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Thursday before traveling to New York for meetings with Jewish officials.

Labor, AIPAC officials spar

Labor Party officials visiting Washington sparred with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Delegation members said the pro-Israel lobby is on the "extreme right wing" and would bear responsibility if the peace process collapses.

Knesset member Yossi Beilin and AIPAC official Steve Rosen traded heated barbs at a reception for the delegation Tuesday night in Washington. The national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, came to AIPAC's defense, accusing the Labor delegation of "tampering" with the American Jewish community.

Lawyer: U.S. has no proof

The attorney for admitted Nazi guard Jakob Reimer accused the U.S. government of having no proof that his client was directly involved with the slaughter of Jews in wartime Poland.

Ramsey Clark's charge came while cross-examining the prosecution's main witness, a Holocaust historian who was on the witness stand for a third straight day. Government prosecutors are seeking to strip Reimer's American citizenship because of his alleged activities during World War II.

NEWS ANALYSIS

U.S., Swiss officials appeal for White House intervention

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — During the course of the past year, critics of Switzerland have set deadline after deadline in hopes of pressuring the country and its banks into resolving Holocaust-era claims.

The latest deadline looming over the Alpine nation is Sept. 1 — the date finance officers of New York City and New York state have promised to begin implementing a series of sanctions against Swiss banks unless they agree to a settlement with Jewish groups.

Both sides have appealed to President Clinton to intervene before the deadline. The administration has already condemned the sanctions, but it remains unclear whether Washington can or will go any further.

Swiss banks have said \$600 million is their best offer for settling bank-related claims.

The World Jewish Congress and lawyers for Holocaust survivors are holding out for a \$1.5 billion "global settlement" that would cover all claims against the commercial banks, the Swiss central bank and the Swiss government.

A handful of states already imposed punitive measures against the banks after the talks broke down in June.

In response to the sanctions, Swiss political and business leaders have appealed to the White House.

Last month, Swiss President Flavio Cotti sent a letter to Clinton urging him to block sanctions against Swiss banks. The Swiss government also wrote to leaders of all 50 U.S. states and 15 major cities urging them to back off from threatened sanctions, warning that it would be a "major mistake" to harm close economic ties between the two countries that include nearly half a million jobs created by Swiss companies in the United States.

Shortly thereafter, a Swiss business group took out advertisements in several major U.S. newspapers urging Clinton to put an end to the threats of sanctions.

Not to be outdone, New York State Comptroller Carl McCall and New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi then sent their own letter to the president urging him to ask the Swiss government to negotiate the restitution of funds taken from Holocaust victims.

"We hope that you will respond by urging President Cotti to direct the Swiss government and Swiss National Bank to join the Swiss commercial banks in negotiating an agreement so that there is finally justice and restitution for Holocaust victims and their heirs," the letter said.

The Swiss government and the Swiss National Bank have refused to join the commercial banks in the negotiations and have said they would not be a part of any settlement.

The New York finance officials also defended the punitive measures being contemplated.

"Economic sanctions helped to bring about social justice in South Africa," they wrote, referring to state and local efforts to end apartheid during the 1980s, which the federal government opposed. "They can do so in Switzerland as well."

Clinton has yet to respond to either letter, and sources say it is unlikely that he will

MIDEAST FOCUS

Arafat presses Albright

Yasser Arafat reportedly sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asking her to tell Israel not to delay negotiations any longer. The Palestinian leader wrote that his side had done all it could to unfreeze the deadlocked talks.

Mordechai: No reason for panic

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said there was no reason for a public panic over the latest developments in Iraq.

He added that U.S. and Israeli officials were exchanging information after Iraqi officials had rejected any further cooperation with United Nations arms inspectors.

Catcalls greet Arafat

Palestinian legislators shouted catcalls when Yasser Arafat announced that his newly expanded Cabinet would include all but one of his previous 18 ministers.

Former Agriculture Minister Abdul Jawad Saleh, who had wanted to be excluded from the Palestinian leader's new, 28-member Cabinet, shouted in protest when Arafat gave him a new portfolio. Arafat disbanded his Cabinet in June amid charges of widespread corruption and financial mismanagement.

Workers appeal to premier

A group of Romanian laborers in Israel broke through a security barrier to complain to their visiting premier about working conditions in the Jewish state.

The workers said they had not received their salaries for months and they would be sent home immediately if they complained.

Romanian Prime Minister Radu Vasile later told a group of the workers that an agreement should be reached to set standards for working conditions. Some 30,000 Romanians work in Israel, with most holding construction jobs.

go further than the public statements already made by Stuart Eizenstat, his point man on Holocaust restitution issues.

Eizenstat, the undersecretary of state for economic affairs, has repeatedly criticized the sanctions, saying they will only lead to a hardening of the Swiss position and complicate efforts to reach a settlement.

But he has not suggested that the administration would or could do anything to intervene beyond the concern it has already expressed through various channels. In testimony before the Senate Banking Committee last month, he appealed to both sides for a period of "calm" and "reflection," while urging both sides to return to the negotiating table.

That leaves Swiss banks and Jewish groups running up against another deadline with slim prospects of achieving progress or averting additional sanctions.

For now, it appears to be a gamble the Swiss banks are willing to take.

Some observers say Swiss government and banking officials are intent on waiting out the current sanctions push at least through the November midterm elections in the United States, with the hope that the posturing and pressure against Switzerland will lighten up.

One of the lawyers representing Holocaust survivors, however, called that strategy a "miscalculation" that could backfire.

Michael Hausfeld, a Washington attorney, said that if the Sept. 1 deadline comes and goes without progress, Jewish negotiators may consider setting their sights on a higher figure than the \$1.5 billion settlement proposal.

Meanwhile, frustration is continuing to grow among the Holocaust survivors awaiting compensation.

Hausfeld said the survivors he is representing are considering staging protests in coming weeks outside some of the offices of American subsidiaries of Swiss banks.

At the same time, some positive movement has occurred on other fronts. Both Swiss and Jewish negotiators met twice last week with a federal judge in New York who is considering whether to hear a multibillion class-action lawsuit against the banks.

The meetings failed to yield immediate progress, but Judge Edward Korman is expected to convene follow-up discussions.

In another move, the U.S. House of Representatives was expected to consider an amendment this week that aims to prevent the federal government from filing lawsuits to block the state and local sanctions against Swiss banks.

The measure comes in anticipation of a possible ruling by the World Trade Organization that such sanctions are illegal.

As a member of the this organization, the United States would be obligated to compel states and municipalities to abide by the organization's ruling, possibly through lawsuits.

There is no indication that the administration is considering any such action. □

Olympics to accommodate religion

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — Organizers of the next Olympic Games are making plans to accommodate observant Jewish athletes.

The Games are slated to take place here in September 2000.

The Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games has agreed to provide accommodations in the Olympic village for a rabbi over Shabbat and the Jewish New Year, said Sandy Hollway, chief executive officer of the committee.

Hollway, in a letter sent to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, said services would be conducted at an interfaith center in the Olympic village and kosher food would be available.

The closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games are slated to take place on Rosh Hashanah.

"For the very first time Jewish members of the Olympic family will be catered for within the Olympic village," said Amanda Gordon, vice president of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Bombers' convictions upheld

A U.S. federal appeals court ruled that the four men convicted of the 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center received a fair trial. But the court ordered resentencing for the militant Muslims because they did not have lawyers present during the original sentencing.

The four, who were arrested within weeks of the bombing, have said they carried out the attack to avenge U.S. support for Israel.

L.A. synagogue vandalized

Vandals spray-painted a synagogue in suburban Los Angeles with the words, "Stop Murdering the White Race." The graffiti included the Internet address of the National Alliance, a white supremacy group based in West Virginia.

Anti-Semitic leaflets signed by the group have been found in mailboxes in several Los Angeles communities during the past few weeks. Police are investigating the vandalism as a hate crime, but say they are not certain the perpetrators are connected with the National Alliance.

Argentina investigating Iranian

Argentine officials are investigating whether an Iranian man is linked to the bombings of two Jewish targets in Buenos Aires. Police became suspicious when they found photos in the man's possession of demonstrations organized by a leading Argentine Jewish group. Argentina has been unable to find those responsible for the March 1992 car bombing of the Israeli Embassy and the July 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center. A total of 115 people were killed and some 500 were wounded in the two attacks.

Fights break out in Australia

Street fights broke out in Australia between supporters and opponents of a controversial far-right politician. Pauline Hanson angrily confronted her critics by declaring, "You won't get rid of me."

Shouting protesters called Hanson "racist scum" and "Nazi." Hanson has sparked a bitter debate in Australia with her claims that the country is being overrun by Asians and that Aborigines receive privileged treatment. Polls show her One Nation Party is supported by about 14 percent of the population.

Britain denies charges

Britain denied allegations by Israel's official anti-Semitism monitoring panel that there had been a marked rise in attacks on British Jews.

The panel, led by Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh, had reported in June that street attacks on British Jews were part of a global increase in violent anti-Semitism linked to Israel's jubilee.

Murders in the West Bank prompt calls for tough stance

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The slayings of two settlers near the West Bank town of Nablus have dealt a blow to the fragile Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

But political observers in Israel believe that the talks, already proceeding at a sluggish pace, will nonetheless continue.

Israeli hard-line politicians called for an end to negotiations with the Palestinians after the shooting deaths of the settlers, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who convened his Security Cabinet on Wednesday to discuss the situation, appeared to be unwilling to take that step.

The shooting victims — identified as Harel Ben-Nun, 18, and Shlomo Liebman, 24 — were shot dead while on a nighttime security patrol of Yizhar, a settlement with some 55 families.

During the Cabinet session, several ministers demanded that Israel toughen its stance against the Palestinians. Transport Minister Shaul Yahalom of the National Religious Party demanded that the negotiations be suspended until the Palestinian Authority transferred suspected terrorists to Israel.

Netanyahu rejected demands to announce the creation of new West Bank settlements, but he approved expanding the borders of Yizhar.

The move, however, did not represent a change in policy because Netanyahu has previously backed the expansion of existing settlements.

Responding to heavy pressure from the right for a proper response, the premier told Israel Radio that the slayings demonstrated the need for a Palestinian crackdown on militants before Israel agrees to a further West Bank redeployment.

He also said Wednesday that the incident strengthened his conviction that Israel should insist on a "correct redeployment" to ensure the safety of West Bank settlers.

In a speech to Palestinian legislators in the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat made no direct reference to the attack.

He charged that Israel "bears total responsibility for the total freeze in the peace process and the total chaos that will engulf the entire region if the peace process is destroyed."

Palestinian negotiator Nabil Sha'ath said the attack would not affect the political process because the talks were frozen anyway and Israel did not intend to carry out a further West Bank withdrawal.

In the wake of the shooting, the army imposed a curfew on Palestinian villages in the area and set up roadblocks in hopes of finding the perpetrators.

Army officials also sought the help of the Palestinian police in locating those responsible.

While leaders from the right and left of Israel's political spectrum condemned the attack, their suggested responses differed.

Opposition leader Ehud Barak, in Washington with a delegation of Labor Party leaders to push for their vision of peace, urged that the negotiations continue.

Hard-line legislator Michael Kleiner, a member of the Geshet Party, called for convening the Knesset from summer recess to vote on a proposal that would halt the negotiations until Arafat turned over the attackers to Israel.

The leaders of the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, met with Maj. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, whose command includes the West Bank.

The settler leaders complained that the weapon of one of the victims had been confiscated by the army before the attack.

The army has maintained a policy of revoking the weapons licenses of settlers considered a menace to public safety.

Ya'alon said the army would review the policy in light of the attack.

According to Ya'alon, the attackers who mounted the ambush on the patrol were apparently very familiar with the route. He said there were no prior intelligence warnings of attacks in the area. □

Take me out to the ballgame for Israeli music, kosher food

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — The banner yet waved — the Israeli blue-and-white banner, that is.

Before Tuesday night's baseball game at Shea Stadium between the New York Mets and the San Francisco Giants, a group of youngsters stood in center field holding both the American and Israeli flags.

As the more than 30,000 fans looked on in rapt attention, and the players from both teams stood with their hats over their hearts, Israeli singer David "Dudu" Fisher sang "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem, before he launched into an operatic rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Many of the fans in the audience mouthed the words to both anthems.

This unlikely scene was just one of many that occurred at Jewish Night at Shea, home of the Mets.

Fisher had already performed a 25-minute concert behind home plate, singing popular selections from "Fiddler on the Roof" and Israeli classics such as "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" ("Jerusalem of Gold").

Although it was called Jewish Night, it was really Israel Night — as per an arrangement between the Mets and the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Pins commemorating Israel's 50th anniversary were distributed to the first 25,000 fans, and Israel's consul general in New York, Shmuel Sisso, threw out the ceremonial first ball. Between innings, the center-field telescreen played videos promoting tourism to Israel and Jewish trivia questions.

But for one fan at least, Israel has nothing on Shea.

"When I went to Israel, I didn't get the feeling that I'm getting here," said Howie Heller of Queens, who was wearing a Mets cap with the team's name spelled out in Hebrew.

Jewish Night was part of International Week at Shea — at other games, the Mets commemorated African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and the Irish.

During the week, the heritage, or heritages, of the player at bat was displayed on the telescreen.

"It's meant to be a celebration" of all of the cultures "that make New York great," said Mark Bingham, senior vice president of marketing and broadcasting for the Mets.

The Jewish Night festivities brought Annette Prager of Bergenfield, N.J., to a Mets game for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Mets management has instituted a few changes since then, such as a glatt kosher hot dog stand located on the ground-level concourse on the first-base side.

Lines at the stand, which opened in May, were long. Some fans had to wait several innings before they could head back up to their seats with their kosher hot dogs, pastrami sandwiches and falafel.

It was the best night ever for the stand, said David Senter, the head of Star Services, the concession company that operates the stand.

"We served about 3,000 people," he said, a huge increase from the fewer than 1,000 people who normally wait in line.

Near the kosher stand, groups of men davened, fulfilling their

daily prayer obligations. "Jews stop to pray everywhere," David Bruckner of Long Island said by way of explanation.

Indeed, between the davening and the dress of the people — men wearing yarmulkas, women in long skirts — the concourse near the stand had the feel of a Jewish summer camp reunion.

No one seemed to care that it was all a bit schmaltzy.

No one seemed to care that Fisher tripped up on the Star-Spangled Banner, pronouncing the word "spangled" as "sprangled."

No one seemed to care that it was impossible to understand Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's message on the telescreen because the picture and sound had not been synchronized.

As Elliott Roth, a regular attendee at Met games, put it, "It's nice to see some yarmulkas out here."

By the way, the Mets squeaked by the Giants, winning 7-6 in 10 innings. □

Shari Lewis, TV entertainer, creator of Lamb Chop, dies

By Julia Strongwater

NEW YORK (JTA) — Shari Lewis, a universally known puppeteer and creator of award-winning children's television, has died at 64.

With her ventriloquism skills and her well-known side kicks — Lamb Chop, Hush Puppy and Charlie Horse — Lewis was able to reach the homes and hearts of children everywhere.

Born in New York on Jan. 17, 1934, Lewis' love for music began with piano instruction when she was 2 years old.

Her first big break in show business came in 1952, when she won the "Arthur Godfrey Talent Scouts" TV show.

Five years later, she introduced her sock puppet, Lamb Chop, to the "Captain Kangaroo Show."

Lewis had a highly successful career, winning 12 of television's coveted Emmy Awards.

This led her eventually to develop her own television show, "The Shari Show."

Although she was raised in an observant Jewish home — her father taught at Yeshiva University — Lewis herself was turned off by Judaism at a young age because when she was growing up girls generally did not have Bat Mitzvahs.

"I remember all the children putting their menorahs in the window at Chanukah.

"I never did that," Lewis recalled when she was presented with the B'nai B'rith Dor L'Dor Award in 1996.

But in recent years, as women became more active in Jewish ritual, Lewis identified more openly with her Jewish identity through her work.

She produced two Jewish holiday programs for PBS — "Lamb Chop's Special Chanukah" and "Shari's Passover Surprise" — that also are available on video.

She said she designed the Chanukah show to bring the holiday to non-Jews as well as Jews.

"I went first to my non-Jewish friends as guests because I want to introduce this family holiday to the entire community and let non-Jews know it's okay to watch this," she said.

Lewis also wrote a children's book, "One-Minute Jewish Stories." □