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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Web site stirs controversy

The Internet Web site of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement contains a constitution that supports armed struggle against Israel instead of a negotiated peace.

The Fatah Constitution — posted on www.fateh.org — says the movement opposes “any political solution offered as an alternative to demolishing the Zionist occupation in Palestine.” [Page 1]

Israelis probing embassy blast

Israeli investigators at the site of the U.S. Embassy bombing in Kenya suspect that Semtex was used in the blast. If the powerful explosive was indeed used, it could provide an important clue regarding who was responsible for the attack.

Survivors testify at N.Y. trial

Survivors recalled the horrors of the Holocaust during the trial of a man accused of helping the Nazis massacre Jews.

The U.S. Justice Department is seeking to denaturalize Jakob Reimer because he allegedly lied about killing Jews at several sites in wartime Poland in his 1952 application to immigrate to the United States. The survivors spoke of the cruelty they had witnessed at several ghettos, but none could identify Reimer.

Israel to join nuclear talks

Israel agreed to join global negotiations aimed at forging a treaty to ban the production of materials used to make nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been urged by President Clinton not to oppose the efforts of a U.N. panel in Geneva to launch the negotiations. The premier said in a statement that while he would not oppose the talks, Israel still had “problems of principle” with any accord that would halt the production of plutonium and enriched uranium. [Page 4]

Clinton urged to visit Jewish site

Thirty-four members of Congress urged President Clinton to tour a Jewish site in Moscow when he visits Russia next month for a scheduled summit with President Boris Yeltsin. Such a visit would “make clear our commitment to countering ethnic hatred and anti-Semitism in Russia,” the congressmen wrote in a letter.

Arafat's party calls for end to Israel on group's Web site

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Web site of Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement contains a constitution that supports armed struggle against Israel instead of a negotiated peace.

The group's constitution — posted on www.fateh.org — says Fatah opposes “any political solution offered as an alternative to demolishing the Zionist occupation in Palestine.” The Web site, which has been criticized by Israeli officials, also contains numerous articles and editorials — one of which accuses Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of plotting to assassinate Arafat.

In addition to serving as chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Arafat is head of Fatah, the largest party in the Palestine Liberation Organization, which Arafat also leads.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman, David Bar-Illan, said the site is “as clear an indication as any that the PLO has not abandoned its intention to destroy the State of Israel.”

Dore Gold, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, said he plans to discuss the Web site next week with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Fares Kadurah, a member of Fatah's top representative body in the West Bank and a member of the Palestinian legislative council, said in an interview that he had no idea who had set up the Web site, adding that Fatah had been “done much damage” by the materials posted on the site.

He charged that the “publicity around the publications on the Web site is the result of Zionist propaganda,” he said.

Noting that “Fatah supports the peace process,” Kadurah said his movement is presently dedicated to using political means to achieve its ends.

But, he added, “if we fail, we shall maintain the option of popular struggle, including reasonable violence, which will be accepted by world public opinion.”

The constitution posted on the Web site also lists the movement's “essential principles,” one of which states that the “Israeli existence in Palestine is a Zionist invasion with a colonial expansive base, and it is a natural ally to colonialism and international imperialism.”

Describing Fatah as a “movement representing the revolutionary vanguard of the Palestinian people,” the constitution also calls for the “complete liberation of Palestine, and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military and cultural existence.”

This call, contained in Article 12 of the constitution, makes no distinction between Israel and the territories it captured — the West Bank and Gaza Strip — during the 1967 Six-Day War. Kadurah described Fatah's Constitution as “outdated” and that it needs to be amended by the General Conference of Fatah, which he said has not convened since 1989.

As part of its negotiations with the Palestinians, Israel has been calling on Arafat to live up to clauses in already-signed agreements aimed at creating an atmosphere of peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

These clauses include the revocation of the anti-Israel clauses contained in the Palestinian Covenant — the founding charter of the PLO, which is a different document than the Fatah Constitution — and to clamp down on anti-Israel rhetoric expressed by Palestinian officials and media.

Israel's U.N. envoy has repeatedly brought the issue of the covenant to the attention

MIDEAST FOCUS

Premier backs defense increases

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he favored increasing defense spending in the 1999 budget to meet what he described as "strategic needs."

The premier did not specify the increase. He left the decision to his Cabinet, which is holding several sessions this week to discuss the budget.

Paratroopers caught by surprise

An Israeli paratroopers outpost in southern Lebanon was caught by surprise when a member of Hezbollah managed to enter the post.

The Hezbollah gunman got into a fistfight with an Israeli soldier before escaping.

A senior Israeli army official called for an inquiry into the incident.

Arafat, Mandela meet

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and South African President Nelson Mandela gave each other medals during a ceremony in Cape Town. The two leaders warmly embraced and praised each other for having championed their respective causes and triumphed.

Israel to bar PLO officials

Israel said it would bar four top PLO officials from entering the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there was no reason to let in the officials — including Farouk Kaddoumi, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee — because they opposed Israeli-Palestinian peace deals.

Diggers find Christian artifacts

Israeli archaeologists found Christian artifacts among graves they excavated near Jerusalem.

The artifacts included burial urns, glass and jewelry that dates back to the fifth and sixth centuries C.E.



Daily News Bulletin

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of the world body. Gold said in an interview that the Fatah Constitution "raises very serious questions about whether the covenant has been changed." Palestinian officials have repeatedly maintained that the covenant was amended in April 1996.

Other articles posted on the Web site are an instructive source for the movement's opinions about a host of issues related to the peace process.

An editorial, "Palestinian Independence: Legitimate Struggle, Not Conspiracy," refers to two key players on President Clinton's peace process team — the Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, and the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Martin Indyk — as "U.S. administration Zionists."

The editorial also calls Clinton a "lame duck due to the pressures of the Israeli lobby."

Its harshest words are reserved for Netanyahu, who is described as believing that "Arabs, and Palestinians in particular, have no choice but to comply with his will."

The editorial further accuses Netanyahu of "planning to get rid of President Arafat, since he finds him an insurmountable obstacle."

"In fact," the editorial continues, "all of the rumors spread by the Israeli press and agents about Arafat's health are an attempt to prepare public opinion to accept the Israeli assassination plan as a natural development."

Kadurah found the allegations of an assassination plot to be plausible.

"It should be in the interest of all governments in the area to keep Arafat alive," he said. "But I do believe that the Israelis could plot to kill Arafat if they were led to believe that his murder could lead to internal strife within Palestinian society." □

(JTA correspondent Gil Sedan in Jerusalem and JTA staff writer Julia Goldman contributed to this report.)

Labor members criticize Barak's talks with premier

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Members of Israel's Labor Party have criticized the party's chairman for holding discussions with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the possible creation of a national unity government.

Ehud Barak met with Netanyahu earlier this week in what was supposed to be a secret meeting. But Labor Knesset members charged that the premier leaked the meeting to the media in an effort to exert pressure on hard-liners in his Cabinet who are opposed to further Israeli redeployment from the West Bank.

The opposition leader and the prime minister reportedly discussed the possibility of forming a national unity government as soon as the long-delayed Israeli redeployment in the West Bank takes place. The timing of that pullback remains in doubt after Israeli-Palestinian talks were suspended last week.

Senior Labor officials questioned how Barak could participate in the discussions while at the same time stating publicly that Netanyahu was unfit to govern.

The two met after Barak returned to Israel from a weeklong visit to the United States, during which he tried to gain support in Washington and in the Jewish community for the Labor Party's approach to the peace process.

Sources close to Barak explained that when a premier invites the head of the opposition for a secret meeting, the invitation must be accepted.

Three months ago, after Israeli media reported on a supposedly secret meeting between Barak and Netanyahu, the Labor Party leader's office declared angrily that there would be no more secret meetings and that future meetings between the two would be made public.

But Barak has reportedly met secretly with Netanyahu at least four times in the past three months.

Knesset member Yossi Beilin, who accompanied Barak on his U.S. visit, said he had no problem with the meeting but was concerned about its substance.

"It's clear that there will not be a national unity government because Netanyahu understands that this will mean a divorce with the extreme right," said Beilin. □

JEWISH WORLD

FBI offers help in AMIA probe

The FBI offered to run genetic tests to identify the driver of a car used in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

The test could help determine whether the driver was a suicide bomber or someone duped into driving the vehicle. The offer was contained in an FBI report that accused Iranian officials of involvement in the attack, which killed 86 people and left some 300 wounded.

Commandments ruling issued

Public schools in South Carolina can display the Ten Commandments if they are part of an exhibit aimed at teaching students about law, history or culture, according to an opinion written by the state's attorney general. But displaying the Ten Commandments alone would be unconstitutional, the opinion said. The state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union threatened legal action, saying the opinion invites South Carolina schools to violate students' religious rights.

Bishop weighs in on crosses

Poland's leading Catholic clergyman called on radical religious groups to stop erecting crosses at the site of the Auschwitz death camp. Cardinal Josef Glomp issued the call after fringe Catholic groups, backed by hard-line priests, ignored Jewish protests and set up some 90 crosses at the site.

Meanwhile, six Jewish members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to the Polish prime minister, Jerzy Buzek, calling on him to have the crosses removed.

Architect calls for decision

The American architect whose design is favored for Germany's planned national Holocaust memorial said a decision should be made soon on whether the controversial memorial will be built.

The memorial "has to move away from politics and gradually become living memory," said Peter Eisenman. The proposed memorial, which has been mired in controversy for more than a decade, recently became a political football in the run-up to the Sept. 27 national elections.

Program to focus on Holocaust

A New Jersey college will offer a master's degree program devoted solely to Holocaust and genocide studies.

The interfaith, interdisciplinary program at Richard Stockton College was inspired by a New Jersey law mandating that all state public school districts teach about the Holocaust.

Orthodox students lose bid for Yale housing exemption

By John Woods
Connecticut Jewish Ledger

WEST HARTFORD, Conn. (JTA) — A group of Orthodox Jewish students has lost its legal bid to be exempted from Yale University's housing policy.

A U.S. District Court judge in Hartford ruled that Yale's policy requiring some students to live in coed dormitories does not violate federal housing and antitrust laws.

Judge Alfred Covello ruled in favor of Yale's motion to dismiss the case based on the plaintiffs' inability to prove, among other things, that the university should be held to civil rights laws normally applied to governmental agencies.

Covello made no ruling on the allegations of religious discrimination brought by the four Orthodox students. He also did not rule on whether the students' civil rights had been violated.

The students, known as the "Yale Four," filed suit against the university last year, alleging that the university's on-campus living regulation conflicted with their religious beliefs.

A fifth student originally involved in the suit, Rachel Wohlgernter of Los Angeles, got married in order to escape the on-campus living requirement.

The July 31 ruling was not made public until last Friday. The students announced that they would appeal the ruling to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

"We are extremely pleased that the court has decided this suit," said Dale Robinson, Yale vice president and general counsel. "Yale College's residential requirement is premised on an educational philosophy which values bringing people of diverse backgrounds together in a vibrant community. Yale's rule does not conflict with any legal requirement."

Nathan Lewin, lead attorney for the students, said he never expected the suit to be determined in District Court and that while the ruling is a disappointment, it would be appealed.

"With all due respect to Judge Covello, the ruling is demonstrably wrong," said Lewin. "I'm disappointed, but I never expected the case to be determined by a District Court judge."

The suit brought by the students — two freshmen and two sophomores — claims that dormitories which feature co-ed living conditions and bathrooms as well as alleged sexual activity in the dormitories are in violation of their Orthodox beliefs. Yale requires that in lieu of a housing fee waiver, freshmen and sophomores are required to live in university dormitories.

Covello dismissed the students' allegation that Yale violated the Fair Housing Act, ruling that because Yale had offered housing to the students, they had no grounds on which to sue. "The students could have opted to attend another university if they were not satisfied with Yale's housing policy," wrote Covello in his decision.

The judge also dismissed the claim that Yale's housing policy is in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act: that Yale essentially holds a monopoly on the housing of its students and that it is illegal for the university to tie the purchase of one good or service with another — in this case, housing with education.

Covello did not consider whether Yale had violated the students' civil rights because he determined that the Yale Four lawyers had not proven that Yale is a "state actor" or an entity with sufficient links to government to be held accountable to laws concerning civil rights infractions alleged by the students.

"We believe the judge erred in not reaching the merits of the students' religious discrimination and equal protection claims," said Lewin. "He also failed to recognize that, because of Yale's long history of state sponsorship, as well as its close cooperation with and funding by the government, civil rights law requires it to respect the constitutional rights of its students."

Lewin said that he does not expect the Appeals Court to hear any motions until at least November, with a ruling not likely until March or April 1999. He also said that he expects the case to eventually be heard by the Supreme Court. □

Germans consider setting up survivors compensation fund

By Deidre Berger

BERLIN (JTA) — Deutsche Bank's recent admission that it dealt with Nazi gold may add momentum to establish a central compensation fund in Germany for Holocaust survivors.

The admission came with the release last month of an independent commission's report detailing the bank's wartime role.

The bank, which has been in restitution negotiations with the World Jewish Congress for about a year, said the report "reaffirmed its moral responsibility for the darkest chapter in its history and deeply regrets any injustices."

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said the talks have intensified since the report was released on July 31.

"We are in the process of finding a just solution," he said.

Discussion of expanding German compensation to Holocaust survivors, which is expected to be taken up by the next German Parliament, comes as Swiss banks and Jewish groups are deadlocked in negotiations over settling Holocaust-era claims against Swiss companies.

Some Germans are proposing a general compensation fund for survivors underwritten by German companies that benefitted from slave labor and German banks that profited from the personal assets of Holocaust victims.

The candidate leading in the polls for chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, has said he would support the fund, as has the Green Party, a possible coalition partner if the Social Democrats win the Sept. 27 election.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, one of whose vice presidents is German Jewish leader Ignatz Bubis, recently called on German companies to set up a compensation fund for Holocaust survivors.

During the past decade, several German companies have commissioned historians to research their firm's involvement in the Third Reich.

But the Deutsche Bank report is one of the clearest statements to date on how much German corporate leaders knew about the Holocaust.

The report on the bank's gold transactions during World War II was more specific than expected, said Hanno Loewy, director of the Frankfurt-based Fritz Bauer Institute, which is dedicated to Holocaust research and education.

"This should bring more pressure on other companies" researching their activities during the war, he said.

The bank's report "should serve as a model for other companies, which now will have to ask what responsibility their company has for the looting of Jewish victims and slave laborers," said Christopher Kopper, a professor of history at the University of Goettingen.

Kopper, the son of a former director of Deutsche Bank, has written extensively on the role of German banks during World War II.

The report, prepared by an international commission of five historians, said it could find no direct evidence that the directors of Deutsche Bank knew the origins of the gold bought from the central government bank, the Reichsbank.

But the report said one of the bank's influential board members, Hermann Abs, "had wide-ranging contacts" and it is likely that "he, and perhaps other board members, were aware of the existence of victim gold.

"They might have known that the gold had originally been (and, it can be added, legitimately remained) the property of the victims of Nazi Germany, in the occupied countries but also in the concentration and death camps of the most inhuman and evil regime of human history," it added.

The report said evidence from ledgers of the Reichsbank and from the precious metals company Degussa, which helped smelt the gold the Nazis took from their victims, helped them establish a direct link between gold sold by the Reichsbank and coins, jewelry, gold bars and dental gold the Nazis confiscated at concentration camps and ghettos.

Kopper said the report covers only a fraction of the bank's activities during the war.

Kopper said much of the gold that Deutsche Bank bought from the Reichsbank did not come from victims at concentration camps and ghettos but from central banks in countries occupied by the Nazis, such as Czechoslovakia, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In March, Deutsche Bank donated approximately \$3 million in proceeds from the sale of gold bars that belonged to the bank after the war to the World Jewish Restitution Organization for the benefit of Holocaust survivors and the March of the Living Foundation.

The bank's report is currently available on the Internet at www.beck.de □

Israel joins U.N. negotiations on nuclear material production

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has agreed to join global negotiations aimed at banning the production of materials used to make nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been urged by President Clinton not to oppose the efforts of a U.N. panel in Geneva to launch the negotiations.

The premier said in a statement that while he would not oppose the talks, the Jewish state still had "problems of principle" with any accord that would halt the production of plutonium and enriched uranium.

Israel was the last of the 61-member United Nations Conference on Disarmament to agree to the negotiations.

"We have made clear that our support for establishing the [negotiating] committee does not mean we are taking a position toward finalizing the treaty or its contents," Netanyahu said in the statement.

Israel is concerned that the treaty will call for verification procedures — which would mean that the Jewish state would have to open its Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev Desert to international inspectors.

Israel reportedly hopes that if it does eventually sign the treaty, American officials would find a way to enable the Jewish state to retain its policy of deliberate ambiguity regarding its nuclear capability. □