



Daily News Bulletin

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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinton to meet both leaders

President Clinton will meet separately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat next week in Washington, according to White House and Israeli officials. The announcement of the meeting came as U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was quoted as saying, "There has been some dramatic progress" in the peace negotiations.

Netanyahu addresses U.N.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said a unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinian Authority would cause a total collapse of the peace process.

Netanyahu's address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York came just a day after Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat reiterated that the Palestinians would, indeed, make such an announcement on May 4, 1999, after the end of the interim period spelled out under the Oslo accords. [Page 3]

Ben & Jerry's cancels contract

Ben & Jerry's canceled a contract with an Israeli mineral water company in the Golan Heights to supply water for its sherbet.

The move by the American ice cream manufacturer came after pressure from several U.S.-based groups.

The Zionist Organization of America condemned the decision, which it called "endorsing the historical revisionism of Arab propagandists."

Scandal rocks southern Russia

The mayor of a southern Russian town sued the region's governor for calling his administration a "Zionist nest."

The governor of the region of Krasnodar, Nikolai Kondratenko, has repeatedly expressed anti-Semitic, racist and anti-Western statements.

The Kremlin has not responded to numerous requests from Russia's Jewish community to investigate Kondratenko, who is a supporter of beleaguered President Boris Yeltsin. Kondratenko, who was elected governor in 1996, heads an alliance of ultranationalists, Communists and Cossacks that rules the largely agricultural region.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Philanthropists, educators join to make Israel integral for youth

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group of Jewish philanthropists, educators and Israel-program administrators wants to revolutionize the Israel experience — starting in America.

A report soon to be issued by the Youth and Education Task Force of Israel Experience, Inc. is calling on North American Jews "to once and for [all] do what has never been done in American Jewish life: to develop a total, coordinated, and comprehensive effort to make the Israel experience an integral part of the life of every young Jew."

"As a matter of principle," said Brandeis University's president and the task force's chairman, Jehuda Reinharz, quoting the report's recommendations, "no Jewish education should be considered complete without an Israel experience."

The idea that spending time in Israel strengthens Jewish identity has been well-established, yet only 15 percent of North American Jews ever make the trip.

Israel Experience, Inc. — a consortium of the UJA-Federations of North America, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation — was launched two years ago to at least double participation in Israel-based programs through marketing campaigns.

Since then it has witnessed an increase of 50 percent enrollment in such programs, primarily among high school students.

Earlier this year, Michael Steinhardt, a leading Jewish philanthropist, introduced plans for Birthright Israel, an ambitious international initiative to enable every Diaspora Jew to spend time in Israel.

What the task force report — titled "Im Tirzu" after Theodor Herzl's Zionist motto, "If you will it, it is no dream" — recommends, however, is not only a systematic approach for promoting Israel-based programs, but a community-wide "cultural change" in the way North American Jews regard Israel.

"It's a question of mind set and of understanding that Israel is an important part, a necessary part of the Jewish identity," Reinharz said in a telephone interview.

Reinharz was joined in developing the report by Avram Infeld, director of the Birthright Israel project, Marlene Post, the president of Hadassah, and Cindy Chazen, the executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, Conn., as well as Jewish educators and professors from Israel and America.

Their report, which comes after a yearlong, in-depth examination of Israel-based programs, recommends the following "comprehensive and embracing" action:

- integrating a contemporary vision of Israel at every level of the American Jewish educational experience,
- developing programmatic standards for educational content and a system of accreditation, and
- mobilizing Jewish leaders and the entire Jewish communal infrastructure to make the Israel experience a paramount priority in Jewish life.

The report urges the Jewish community to deliver a consistent message to students and parents: "We are committed to your Israel experience and we will do all in our power to facilitate and prepare you for it."

Joel Schindler, the outgoing chief executive officer of Israel Experience, Inc., however, advised caution in delivering this message to teen-agers, who are generally

MIDEAST FOCUS

French leader discusses peace

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told the U.N. General Assembly that his country supports U.S. efforts to move the Middle East peace process forward. He also told the world body about a proposal floated earlier this year to convene a regional peace conference should the U.S. effort prove fruitless.

Israelis flock to casino

Some 20,000 Israelis visited the Jericho casino during its first week of operation. Half of these visitors came during the Rosh Hashanah holiday.

Palestinian: 'We will fight'

A top Palestinian security official said his troops would fight back against Israel if hostilities break out in response to a declaration of Palestinian statehood. "We will fight to defend our state and existence by all means available," the head of Palestinian general intelligence, Amin al-Hindi, said earlier this week.

Group calls for Vanunu's release

A Norwegian anti-nuclear group said it submitted a petition with 1 million signatures to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanding the release of Israeli nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu. Vanunu, 43, a former nuclear technician at the Dimona nuclear plant in southern Israel, has served 12 years of an 18-year sentence for disclosing Israel's nuclear weapons capabilities to The Times of London.

Israel developed nukes in '67

Israel quickly developed nuclear weapons on the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War, according to a new book. But as described in "Israel and the Bomb," which examines Israel's nuclear development during the 1950s and 1960s, other Israeli officials rejected Shimon Peres' suggestion at the time that the Jewish state conduct a test in order to demonstrate its nuclear capability.

more excited by the possibility of making friends than participating in what they might perceive to be an expanded form of Hebrew school.

"I firmly believe that the Israel experience needs to be positioned and marketed as a fun experience," said Schindler, stressing that the educational components can come into play once the participants arrive in the Jewish state.

"The power of the experience will necessarily be transformative," said Schindler, who has a background in biochemistry and marketing.

Taking a cue from the Birthright project's intended goals, the next incarnation of Israel Experience, Inc. would broaden its target constituency to include Bar and Bat Mitzvah-aged teen-agers and college students, as well as young families. It would also expand programming for participants before, during and after each trip to Israel.

In April, Bronfman and Steinhardt began to speak publicly about cooperating in the endeavor, with the possibility of announcing a formal working relationship in November.

Those plans have yet to be finalized. Bronfman said any discussion of how and when Israel Experience, Inc. and Birthright would work together "right now is really conjecture."

Still, representatives from Birthright have been involved in preparations for revamping Israel Experience, Inc., which now serves as a clearinghouse for about 200 Israel-based programs for teen-agers, and in hiring a new executive director for the enterprise.

Michael Papo, a longtime Jewish professional in California's Bay Area, who currently serves as the executive director of the San Francisco-based Koret Foundation, plans to take over Israel Experience, Inc. in October.

An implementation task force should begin work in the coming weeks on how to realize the sweeping recommendations set forth in "Im Tirzu." A report by Israel Experience, Inc.'s college task force is also expected.

Jeffrey Solomon, the executive director of the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation, said that funding for implementation would come from Israel Experience, Inc. and Birthright, with federations, Jewish camps and schools and Jewish community centers playing an active role in recruitment and promotion.

And while Israel Experience, Inc. will suggest curricular materials, its goal, according to Jonathan Woocher, executive director of the Jewish Education Service of North America, is to spur "a real effort to ask, does the way we expose young people to Israel really help them pose the question, 'What does Israel mean to me?'"

Another essential change in perspective, task force members say, is presenting Israel as it stands today, a modern country with its own culture, arts, sports and industries, as well as its own real problems.

"We have to show Israel not simply as a place of refuge for Jews in danger or an outgrowth of the Zionist movement," said Woocher, who sat on the task force. JESNA is developing a series of books called "Israel in Our Lives," which examines Israel from a contemporary point of view.

Reinharz said the goal of the enterprise is "to make Israel a dynamic force that will really speak to each individual in a compelling way."

Moreover, he said, developing personal connections between Diaspora Jews and Israelis has implications beyond fortifying an individual sense of Jewishness.

"I think the shape of Judaism and the Jewish people in the next century will be affected dramatically by whether North American and Israeli Jews see themselves as cousins or as strangers," Reinharz said. □

Dating service ruled legal

SYDNEY (JTA) — An Australian panel ruled that a dating service catering exclusively to Jews is legal.

The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal said it had received enough information that there was a "clear need in the community" for the service.

The decision by the tribunal to grant an exemption to the country's laws that prevent discrimination based on such factors as ethnicity or religion overturns an earlier ruling. □



Daily News Bulletin

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JEWISH WORLD

Polish priest sounds off

A Polish priest known for his anti-Semitic remarks said Poles should not vote for Jews or Russians in next month's government elections.

Henryk Jankowski, who is banned from preaching because of an anti-Semitic sermon he gave last year, made his remarks before a religious service began.

Local elections are scheduled to be held in Poland on Oct. 11.

New York buys Israeli bonds

New York state purchased State of Israel bonds for the first time.

The \$5 million purchase makes New York the 18th state in the United States to buy bonds from the Jewish state.

New York City made a similar purchase earlier this year.

Kansas students protest

Jewish students at the University of Kansas protested anti-abortion billboards that compare aborted fetuses to Holocaust victims.

But a member of the group that put up the signs said, "That's the whole point. I'm weary of genocide snobs who focus solely on their own causes." The group is reportedly planning to put the signs up at 15 to 20 campuses across the United States.

New magazine hits Hungary

The first issue of a new Hungarian Jewish monthly focuses on the relationship between Hungarians and Jews. *Remeny, or Hope*, is financed by the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities.

It is the third Hungarian magazine started in the last 10 years.

Vandals deface Maine synagogue

Vandals drew swastikas and a hate message at a synagogue in Presque Isle, Maine, before Rosh Hashanah.

The swastikas were drawn on either side of the front doors of the Aroostook Hebrew Community synagogue.

The words "Burn Jews" were also written with a felt-tip marker. No one has been arrested since the graffiti were discovered Saturday evening.

Yiddish theater loses home

The oldest continuously running Yiddish theater in New York lost its theater space as a result of the fire last month at Manhattan's Central Synagogue. The loss of its space in the synagogue is threatening the 83rd season of the Folksbiene Theater, which was scheduled to begin at the end of October.

Netanyahu warns world leaders of Palestinian statehood dangers

By Julia Goldman

UNITED NATIONS (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a stern warning to the world.

Palestinian plans to declare an independent state next May would "cause the complete collapse" of the peace process, Netanyahu said Thursday in his address to the United Nations General Assembly.

Netanyahu strongly urged the Palestinian Authority "not to take this course," calling such a move "arbitrary" and "unilateral."

"It will inevitably prompt unilateral responses on our part," he warned. "This development will not be good for the Palestinians, will not be good for Israel, will not be good for world peace."

Netanyahu's remarks before the 185-member world body came just days before Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's scheduled appearance here.

The Palestinian Authority chairman is expected to appeal Monday for international support of a Palestinian declaration of statehood on May 4, 1999, which is the end of the interim period spelled out in the Oslo accords.

The peace process has been deadlocked for more than 18 months, but there were hints of a breakthrough Thursday, when the White House announced that President Clinton would meet separately with Netanyahu and Arafat early next week.

In any event, it appears that final-status talks will not be concluded in the next eight months.

But the Palestinians have repeatedly affirmed their intention to go ahead with a declaration in the absence of a final-status agreement.

In a 20-minute speech received with polite applause, Netanyahu returned repeatedly to the tenuous balance between Palestinian autonomy and Israeli security.

His appearance at the U.N. occurred just hours after a rush-hour explosion at a Jerusalem bus stop injured one soldier.

That occurrence, he said, proved that Israel's security concerns were "not hypothetical."

For enduring peace to succeed, Netanyahu said, "the Palestinians should have all the powers to govern their lives and none of the powers to threaten our lives.

"They will have control of all aspects of their society," Netanyahu insisted, "such as law, religion and education, industry, commerce and agriculture, tourism, health and welfare.

"They can prosper and flourish. What they cannot do is endanger our existence."

The Israeli premier stressed Israel's right to ensure that "the Palestinian entity" would not become a base for hostile or foreign forces, terrorists or weaponry.

"This is the great challenge of the permanent-status negotiations," he announced. "To achieve a durable peace that will strike a balance between Palestinian self-rule and Israel's security," which he added, could be achieved "by negotiations and negotiations alone."

Netanyahu conjured up a vision of Middle East peace in which the region's children would interact peacefully and respectfully and in which countries would cooperate in a regional market-based economy.

"The absence of violence will allow all of us — Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis — to reach a standard of living and quality of life now considered unimaginable."

He also expressed his desire for peace with Lebanon and Syria to "complete the circle of peace with our immediate neighbors."

Taking up a theme introduced at the U.N. this week by other world leaders, including President Clinton, Netanyahu called terrorism "a global cancer."

He also pointed to the development of medium-range missiles by Iran and Iraq's refusal to comply with U.N. weapons inspections as dangers threatening all nations.

Netanyahu peppered his remarks with references to Jewish liturgy, tradition and history, including the Jewish people's historical ties to the land of Israel, which he said had been recognized by the organized international community with the creation of the state of Israel. □

Siemens follows lead, starts slave laborers fund

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Another German firm has reversed course and agreed to establish a fund for slave laborers it employed during World War II.

The announcement by the electronics giant Siemens of an \$11.9 million fund to provide the humanitarian aid came just a year after the company rejected responsibility for compensation payments for these laborers.

Siemens has not yet indicated whether the money will be dispersed in one-time payments or in regular installments, but says it wants to provide quick and unbureaucratic help to needy victims forced to work at its plants during World War II.

The fund will be administered by individuals and organizations who are not connected to Siemens.

Earlier this month, the auto manufacturer Volkswagen announced a similar fund for former slave laborers that also will be managed by leading public figures. Both companies emphasize they have no legal obligation to make compensation payments but acknowledge their moral responsibility.

In August, a number of former slave laborers filed a class-action lawsuit in New York against leading German companies, including Siemens and Volkswagen, to press compensation demands.

Michael Witt, a lawyer representing slave laborers, said Thursday that the funds would not exempt the two firms from another class-action suit that will be filed next week.

In a news release Wednesday, Siemens said it "continues to express its deepest regret for what occurred in those years," pointing out that Siemens voluntarily gave a multimillion-dollar payment to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in the 1960s. The company also says it is trying to prevent a repeat of the tragedies that occurred in Germany through its support of training projects for youth around the world that promote peace and international friendship.

According to company information, at least 50,000 workers were forced to work for Siemens during the war. The Berlin-based organization Action Reconciliation, which works to assist those who suffered at the hands of the Nazis, estimates that one-third of the employees in 1943 were slave laborers, prisoners of war or concentration camp inmates.

Siemens claims that it was ordered by the Nazi government to employ slave labor in order to fulfill the regime's wartime production goals.

After the war started, the work force in Germany was greatly reduced through military conscription. The Nazi government tried to maintain production by forcing millions of Eastern Europeans and concentration camp inmates to work under often inhumane conditions in factories.

During celebrations for its 150th anniversary last year, Siemens rejected demands for compensation from its former forced laborers, claiming the problem could not be solved with money from individual firms. Until recently, German companies have refused to pay compensation to their former slave laborers, arguing that the issue was a political problem that could only be solved by the government. German governmental officials also pushed the

issue aside until recently, claiming it had already been settled through Germany's large financial donations to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s.

However, the international attention focused on the Swiss gold controversy and the agreement of Swiss banks to pay compensation to Holocaust victims have stepped up pressure on German firms to do likewise.

A recent attempt by about 15 German companies to set up a joint compensation fund for former slave laborers failed. □

Groups oppose invitation to U.S. Muslim organizations

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Several Jewish groups have protested a State Department decision to invite Muslim groups that support terrorist organizations to two events promoting religious freedom.

The Anti-Defamation League, the Zionist Organization of America and some religious freedom advocates objected when they saw that the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the American Muslim Council and the Muslim Public Affairs Council were invited to participate in a ceremony inaugurating the State Department's new office of international religious freedom, as well as a meeting of its advisory committee on religious freedom abroad.

The ADL, which sent a letter of protest to the State Department, said it particularly objected to the invitation to CAIR, a group that it said has condoned terrorism and served as a propaganda arm for the militant Islamic group Hamas.

The ZOA objected not only to CAIR, but to the inclusion of the other two groups, which it said have also championed terrorist groups and circulated anti-Semitic views.

The State Department said the two events were open to the public and that a notice was sent out to some 200 individuals and organizations that had attended previous meetings of the advisory committee.

"In a public event, you cannot exclude part of the public unless they violated the law," a State Department official said.

"Attendance by groups in meetings open to the public should not be interpreted to constitute an endorsement by the department of the views of those attending the meeting," the official added.

Jess Hordes, Washington director of the Anti-Defamation League, was not satisfied with that explanation, saying there should be "some obligation" for the State Department "to scrutinize these groups that it invites."

"If the department becomes aware that certain groups' political views are inconsistent with the very notion of religious freedom and religious liberty and engages in ethnic stereotyping, then that ought to say something to the department," Hordes said.

Morton Klein, president of the ZOA, more strongly criticized the State Department's decision.

"One does not fight terrorism by inviting groups that publicly endorse groups on the State Department terror list," said Klein, referring to the groups' support for Hamas. "It is appalling that the State Department would give credibility to such groups by issuing them formal invitations to conferences."

The State Department has not yet formally responded to either letter. □