



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 185

Monday, October 19, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Summit may be extended

With little progress so far, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators may extend the Middle East summit in Maryland past Monday, according to sources familiar with the talks. President Clinton returned to the site of the talks, where he was reportedly expected to make plain to both sides his frustration with the pace of discussions. American officials denied reports that Clinton may pressure the Israeli side by threatening to recognize Palestinian statehood next May.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon joined the summit. A day before attending the talks, Sharon discussed Israel's security concerns with Jordan's King Hussein at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where the monarch is being treated for lymphatic cancer.

Nazi doctor denies wrongdoing

A former Nazi doctor who admitted to working at Auschwitz denied that he took part in atrocities there.

German prosecutors began investigating Hans Muench after he was quoted in a magazine interview as saying that he was not bothered by working at Auschwitz and that gassing Jews spared them from suffering longer in the death camp. The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center called on the German state government of Bavaria to condemn and detain Muench.

Orthodox engineer sues

An engineer at a U.S. Army tank plant is suing the Justice Department, saying he was investigated on spying charges because he is an Orthodox Jew. David Tenenbaum is seeking \$120 million, claiming the investigation was launched because of religious bias. The government dropped its investigation in July. It said it found insufficient evidence that Tenenbaum provided Israel with classified information on tank and missile systems.

CCAR seeks hate crimes laws

The leaders of the American Reform movement issued a call for all states that do not have hate crimes legislation to pass such laws as soon as possible.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis issued the call to coincide with the funeral of Matthew Shepard, the gay University of Wyoming freshman who died last week after being kidnapped and beaten.

ELECTIONS '98

Congressional elections spark little excitement across nation

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Referring to the retired television sitcom about nothing, political handicappers had once labeled next month's congressional elections the "Seinfeld campaign."

But with the Monica Lewinsky scandal still dominating the political landscape, top political activists have now labeled Election 1998 the "Melrose Place campaign."

And just like the steamy Fox sitcom, the election is struggling for viewers.

Before President Clinton's televised admission last month of an improper relationship with the former White House intern, the election was shaping up to be the least engaging of the decade. Now all bets are off in the last balloting of the 20th century.

"The only thing for sure is that anyone who tells you that they know what is going to happen doesn't know what they are talking about," said Michael Bloomfield, political director for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election. But unlike other campaigns in the 1990s that saw record turnover, there are only 34 open seats with no incumbent running and only another couple of dozen competitive races.

In the Senate, 34 members — including four of the 10 Jewish members — are battling across the country to be heard over the debate surrounding the presidential sex scandal and possible impeachment.

Although the campaign has not ignited national excitement, Jewish activists argue that much is at stake for the community in the 106th Congress that will be elected Nov. 3.

In addition to critical domestic issues — including a host of spending concerns — the next Congress is likely to determine the future of the refugee program for Jews from the former Soviet Union and play a critical role in shaping U.S. public opinion when the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords reach their deadline for final agreement next May.

Inside the Washington Beltway, self-imposed Republican term limits for committee and subcommittee chairmen will kick in, once again changing the dynamics of key committees that shape legislation of paramount concern to the Jewish community.

Significant political upheaval is also likely from a Republican battle to succeed Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), who is also slated to step down sometime during the next Congress. Democratic leadership posts are also up for grabs during the next two years.

As Election Day nears, uncertainty abounds over the presidential scandal's impact. Democrats are praying for a backlash against Republicans for their handling of the impeachment investigation.

At the same time, Republicans are hoping that Democratic voters, depressed by presidential scandal, will stay home.

So far, according to polls released at the end of September, the election is not shaping up to be a referendum on Clinton's scandal, and Democrats have not told pollsters that they plan to stay home.

The number of likely voters, however, consistently favor Republican candidates in the closest House and Senate races.

The polls also show that Democrats cannot retake control of the House, where the Republicans now hold a 228-206 majority. There is one independent member. The

MIDEAST FOCUS

Poll: Majority seeks accord

Some 82 percent of Israelis polled want the peace talks currently taking place near Washington to produce an agreement, according to a Gallup poll for the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*.

Thirteen percent of those polled want no deal, and 5 percent are undecided, according to the survey, which polled 1,000 Israelis and has a 3.2 percent margin of error.

The poll also reported that 57 percent of those surveyed support a 13 percent Israeli redeployment, while 30 percent oppose it.

Peres lauds Nobel choices

Former Israeli Prime Minister and Nobel laureate Shimon Peres said the Nobel Peace Prize committee made "an excellent choice" by awarding this year's prize to the leaders of the peace effort in Northern Ireland.

Peres and slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shared the 1994 award with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Arabs seek prisoners' release

Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated near the West Bank town of Ramallah, calling for the release of Arab prisoners from Israeli jails.

The rally coincided with the Middle East summit in Maryland, where one of the issues on the table is the release of 3,000 Palestinians held by Israel for security offenses.

Legislators vow to topple premier

A delegation of Israeli Arab Knesset members vowed to work with the opposition Labor Party to bring down the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The vow came during the group's visit to Cairo for meetings with President Hosni Mubarak and other Egyptian officials.



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.

Republicans control 55 of the 100 seats in the Senate, but they will likely fall short of securing a filibuster-proof 60 seat majority.

The chances of success for Jewish candidates is mixed. Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) are heavy favorites to win re-election. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) is facing a stiff challenge from State Treasurer Matt Fong. Republicans and Democrats alike believe that Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.) could be upset by Rep. Mark Neumann, a Republican.

And in the political equivalent of a heavyweight championship bout, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) is facing off against Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.). Both candidates are making major plays for Jewish support in the election. D'Amato is running what is believed to be the first political ad featuring footage from the Holocaust to highlight his role in securing the recent \$1.25 billion settlement from Switzerland's leading banks.

Most Jewish incumbents in the House are running strong in their races with the exception of Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.), who has served in the House since 1983.

Michigan Democrats fear that the controversial Democratic gubernatorial candidate Geoffrey Fieger, the lawyer for assisted suicide Dr. Jack Kevorkian, will drain voters from other Democratic candidates. Fieger has compared Orthodox rabbis who opposed physician-assisted suicide to Nazis.

Israel is not a predominant issue in the congressional races.

"There is no real grabber race on Israel," said Morris Amitay, the treasurer and founder of the pro-Israel Washington PAC.

While many voters might not pull the lever based only on concern for Israel, candidates continue to capitalize on their support for the Jewish state.

"We are writing to ask for your urgent support of one of America's most important new pro-Israel leaders," the chairman of the AIPAC board Melvin Dow and former chairman Larry Weinberg wrote in a private letter soliciting support for Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.). Sherman, a freshman member of the House, won election in 1996 with 51 percent of the vote.

"Returning Brad Sherman to the United States Congress is an important means of strengthening support for the U.S.-Israel relationship. Brad has been there when we needed him. Now it's up to us to be there when he needs us!" the letter said.

Similar appeals have gone out for Rep. Jon Fox (R-Pa.), a member of the House International Relations Committee, who is locking horns once again with Joseph Hoeffel, a county commissioner. Fox won the last election by a razor-thin majority. The Fox-Hoeffel race is one of the few where Clinton's troubles are playing a direct role in the campaign. Last week Hoeffel said he will stay away from Clinton's Philadelphia fund raiser.

"I don't want to be distracted by all of this sensational and salacious focus on the president's behavior," Hoeffel said in an interview with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "I would love to have Hillary (Clinton) back. I would love to have Al Gore. But not Bill Clinton."

Jewish Democrats put on a brave face arguing that "each candidate running for office is making a decision based on what they think is best to win that office," said Stephen Silberfarb, deputy executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

"Hoeffel is in a very close race. Who can blame him for trying to create the best environment he feels is necessary to get elected?" Silberfarb said.

But Republicans say the Lewinsky scandal is the beginning of the end for Democratic candidates in close races.

The Lewinsky scandal is "not going to play out as a vote for or against people but will have a dramatic impact on turnout. Democrats feel abandoned. Republicans are clearly engaged," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition.

Predictably, Silberfarb disagreed.

"The Republicans are like the Palestinians, they never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity," Silberfarb said, alluding to Israeli statesman Abba Eban's famous saying: "Republicans have pushed the Democrats back together."

Brooks and Silberfarb did agree, however, that in the world of congressional campaigns, there's a lot of time between now and election day. □

JEWISH WORLD

Pacino visits Israeli Arab town to shoot film on Hezbollah safely

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When the producers of a new film starring Al Pacino were looking for a safe Middle East site to shoot a few scenes, they chose an Arab town in Israel.

Unfortunately, politics got in the way.

The producers of the as-yet-unnamed film, in which Pacino plays an American journalist who comes to the region to report on the Lebanon-based Hezbollah, had originally planned to shoot in the picturesque town of Baalbek in Lebanon.

But as a result of concerns over safety, the cast and crew was moved to Umm el-Fahm, one of the largest Arab towns in Israel, which was chosen, in part, because of its similarity to Baalbek.

Then, two weeks before the filming began, local residents, protesting land expropriation by the Israeli military, rioted in one of the most serious confrontations ever between police and Israeli Arabs.

A few days before the filming began, the Umm el-Fahm region became the site of fires.

Five Israeli Arab youths have been detained on suspicion of arson.

And although Mayor Ra'ed Salah Mahajneh gave the green light for the filming, some local influentials had expressed some reservations because they were concerned that the movie would insult Islam.

But the filming went ahead as scheduled.

Pacino spent time last week interviewing the actor playing the leader of Hezbollah in his makeshift Umm el-Fahm command.

The star of "Serpico," "Dog Day Afternoon" and "Scent of a Woman," who was expected to leave the country by the end of the week, stayed at the Dan Caesarea Hotel under a pseudonym.

He changed his name not because he was afraid of zealots from Umm el-Fahm, but because he wanted to avoid the hysteria of Israeli fans. □

Court-appointed doctors rule alleged war criminal fit for trial

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A panel of Lithuanian doctors has ruled that an alleged Nazi war criminal is fit to stand trial.

The decision of the court-appointed commission raises the likelihood that the trial of Aleksandras Lileikis, a top-ranking official in the Nazi-sponsored Lithuanian security police during World War II, will be completed.

Indeed, the court is expected to set a new date before the end of the month to hear the case against Lileikis, whose trial has already been postponed four times this year.

In making their ruling, however, the doctors warned that any stress could endanger the life of Lileikis, who was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1996 for lying about his wartime activities.

"His health could worsen at any moment," Dr. Henrikas Ulevicius, who headed the medical panel, was quoted as saying.

Lileikis, who during the war headed the Vilnius branch of the Saugumas, is suspected of having handed scores of Jews to Nazi death squads.

He denies the charge of genocide, claiming the case against him was fabricated using documents forged by the Soviet KGB.

Both Lithuanian and international Jewish leaders have repeatedly accused Lithuania of dragging its feet in the case.

If the trial does take place, it would be the first trial for Holocaust crimes in any of the three Baltic states since they gained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. □

German doctors reflect on past

The German Society for Children's Medicine admitted it did nothing to stop the Nazis from ending the careers of more than 700 pediatricians who were Jewish or political opponents of the Nazis. At a commemoration ceremony in Dresden, the director of the society said it is important for future generations to remember the fate of their fellow doctors.

Chasidic boy returns home

A 6-year-old Chasidic boy and his parents returned to their Brooklyn neighborhood after the FBI found and arrested his now former nanny in Virginia on charges of kidnapping.

Theresa Giannola Goldberg, a Jehovah's Witness, is charged with kidnapping Chaim Weill in an attempt to take him to a holistic doctor in South Carolina to cure him of ailments including, cerebral palsy.

Rescuer honored in Budapest

A plaque was unveiled in Budapest to commemorate the man who rescued more than 1,600 Hungarian Jews from the Nazis. Among those commemorating Israel Kaszner were Israel's ambassador to Hungary, Joel Alon, and leaders of the Hungarian Jewish community. Kaszner's daughter said she plans to campaign in Israel to have her father's memory honored there as well.

Postal Service honors Brandeis

The U.S. Postal Service commemorated the 50th anniversary of Brandeis University by issuing a postcard honoring the institution. The 20-cent postcard, unveiled during a ceremony at the Waltham, Mass., campus, will be available at post offices across the country.

Rabbi pleads innocence

A 73-year-old rabbi was released without bail after pleading not guilty to charges that he smuggled cocaine and marijuana into a federal prison near Albany, N.Y., where he had provided services to Jewish inmates since 1991.

Eli Gottesman said that he was "tricked" into carrying a bottle of shampoo filled with drugs encased in balloons into the Federal Correctional Institute at Ray Brook. Federal law enforcement officials arrested Gottesman on Oct. 7 after a months-long investigation.

Folksbiene finds home

The sole remaining Yiddish theater company in the United States found a temporary home in a theater on Manhattan's West Side. The New York-based Folksbiene Theater, which is now in its 83rd year, lost its theater space when the Central Synagogue was damaged by fire in August.

Clinton signs bill to open records on war criminals

By Mica Schneider

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Additional U.S. records regarding Nazi war criminals may soon see the light of day.

On Oct. 8, President Clinton signed the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, which was passed by Congress in August.

The new legislation calls for the creation of the Nazi War Criminal Records Interagency Working Group, which will make formerly classified records concerning the Holocaust available to the public.

The president will appoint the members of the working group, which will locate, inventory and recommend records for declassification.

The act requires the director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the historian of the Department of State and the archivist of the United States to be included in the group.

"Federal agencies have been permitted to keep certain information secret, at the expense of families and researchers who are simply looking for closure and answers to questions that have plagued them," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), who sponsored the bill in the House in June.

"The U.S. owes it to the survivors to reveal the truth about war criminals who may have entered this country," Maloney said.

Douglas Bloomfield, an independent consultant who serves at the Washington representative of the World Jewish Congress, said, "We hope this will encourage other countries to follow America's lead providing long-overdue public access to the records of that era."

Declassifying additional documents may lead to new interest in those documents already available, Eli Rosenbaum, director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, said after the signing ceremony.

He noted that of the 15 million pages of information the National Archives houses, 98 percent has already been available for years to the public through the Freedom of Information Act — but few have been interested in delving through it.

"I am hopeful one result of the signing will be an increase in interest among scholars and the media," Rosenbaum said.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the associate dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, applauded the new law.

"We expect to learn more details about the U.S. government's knowledge of the Final Solution," he said.

He added that the release of such information could play a role in the recovery of Nazi gold from Swiss banks and the hunt for Nazi war criminals.

Maloney said through her press secretary that she doesn't expect some of the records to be made available for a couple of years.

The act requires records to be disclosed in their entirety, but agency heads will have the option of exempting certain records they deem a threat to national security, U.S. foreign policy or those that compromise a person's privacy.

Documents still marked classified should be made available as soon as possible, said Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), who sponsored the bill along with Sen. Michael DeWine (R-Ohio) in the Senate.

"With the passing of time it becomes ever more important to document Nazi war crimes, lest the enormity of the crimes be lost to history," Moynihan said.

"It is my view that these documents have been held well beyond the time when their disclosure might have posed a threat to national security — if indeed such a disclosure ever did," the senator added. □

Russian governor steps up verbal anti-Semitic attacks

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The governor of a region in rural southern Russia is once again making waves with his anti-Semitic remarks.

The governor, Nikolai Kondratenko, was sued recently after calling the mayor of the region's largest town, Valery Samoilenko, a "Zionist nest" and a "Judeo-Masonic mafia."

Kondratenko has repeatedly made anti-Semitic, racist and anti-Western statements.

Indeed, say sources in Krasnodar, a largely agricultural region of 5.5 million people, he regularly peppers his speeches with attacks on Zionists and "Judeo-Masons," whom he blames for all of Russia's troubles.

People close to Kondratenko say he strongly believes in the existence of a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world.

Kondratenko, 58, who was elected governor of the Krasnodar region located on the Black Sea in December 1996, heads an anti-reform alliance made up of ultranationalists, Communists and Cossacks.

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.

Earlier this year, Kondratenko generated front-page articles in the Moscow press when he said the essence of Russian history is the battle against Jewish domination.

He blamed the Kremlin "controlled by Jews and Zionists" for the recent war in the southern Russian breakaway republic of Chechnya, for the destruction of the Communist Party, for attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church and for introducing homosexuality in Russia.

Krasnodar's Jewish community, which numbers 3,000, prefers to keep a low profile.

But the organized Russian Jewish community in Moscow has sent several letters urging President Boris Yeltsin to dismiss Kondratenko and to appeal to prosecutors to investigate Kondratenko under a law prohibiting the incitement of interethnic strife.

The Kremlin left these messages unanswered, but last May the Prosecutor's Office dismissed the allegations of anti-Semitism brought against Kondratenko.

In a letter explaining the decision to Russian Jewish Congress President Vladimir Goussinsky, an aide to Russia's prosecutor general said Kondratenko did not commit any crime since he didn't target Jews, but Zionists, who subscribe to an ideology denounced in a 1975 United Nations resolution as a form of racism.

The letter failed to mention that the U.N. revoked the USSR-sponsored resolution in 1991. □