



Daily News Bulletin

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81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Levy to rejoin government

Former Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy agreed to rejoin Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. The premier sought Levy's return to strengthen his position before attempting to create a national unity government, political observers said.

Cabinet ministers Ariel Sharon, Natan Sharansky and Ya'acov Ne'eman are backing the formation of such a government with the opposition Labor Party.

Meanwhile, Sharon said he called off a planned trip to the United States in order to try to "stabilize and broaden" the Israeli government. Sharon was scheduled to attend a donors conference in Washington next week aimed at supporting the Palestinian Authority. [Page 4]

Anti-Semites march in Moscow

A dozen members of the nationalist Black Hundreds group demonstrated in front of the Russian Parliament to support a Communist lawmaker, Gen. Albert Makashov, who stirred controversy with a recent series of anti-Semitic remarks.

Moscow authorities permitted the demonstration, during which the group paraded anti-Semitic banners. One banner read, "Kike Fascists, Russian Nuremberg Awaits You," an apparent reference to the anti-Semitic laws instituted in Nazi Germany.

The group takes its name from an ultranationalist organization in czarist Russia that was notorious for its role in supporting anti-Jewish pogroms.

Ethiopian Jews arrive in Israel

A planeload of 93 Jews from the remote Kwara region of Ethiopia was expected to land Thursday in Israel.

The Israeli government recently decided to expedite the emigration of Jews from Kwara, some of whom have been waiting to make aliyah for as long as seven years.

Unlike the Falash Mura, the Ethiopians from Kwara, who number as many as 4,000, are seen by Israel as indisputably Jewish.

REMINDER: Because of the U.S. Thanksgiving Day holiday, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Friday, Nov. 27.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Clinton's planned Gaza visit is glue keeping Wye together

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — There is one person keeping the Wye agreement from falling apart — President Clinton.

As implementation of the land-for-security agreement signed last month gets off to a belated start, the U.S. president's pivotal role in the process is growing increasingly clear.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat are no longer under the pressure of Clinton's immediate presence as they were during the intense days and nights of negotiations in Maryland that led up to the accord.

But just the same, the two labor under the knowledge that Clinton is soon to arrive in the region for a visit of profound significance.

By scheduling the visit at a key point in the implementation process, the president ensclosed himself in the role of mediator and guarantor of the process.

When the accord was signed Oct. 23 at the White House, many commentators focused on the active role assigned in the agreement to the CIA. They felt that the usually secretive spy service was being given a highly public role and would become the arbiter of security disputes that were bound to arise once the redeployment got under way.

While the CIA role is indeed significant, Clinton's ongoing role in the process is shaping up as the most significant American contribution to the accord's implementation.

In the wake of the further Israeli redeployment last Friday — the first of three called for under the accord — the two sides were soon trading their usual charges and countercharges.

In the redeployment, Israel transferred 2 percent of the West Bank, or some 44 square miles, from sole Israeli control to joint control with the Palestinian Authority. The Jewish state also handed over 7.1 percent of land in the region to sole Palestinian control.

Most of the redeployment was carried out near the West Bank town of Jenin. The second redeployment called for in the accord will be centered around Ramallah, and the third around Hebron.

All three redeployments, which are linked to Palestinian steps to live up to security commitments, are scheduled to be completed by January.

Amid the high drama of a Likud government turning over land to Palestinian control, the two sides were soon aiming verbal broadsides at each other over the release of prisoners, the building of bypass roads, the seizure of land, the opening of a safe-passage route between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and over numerous other issues still unresolved or unimplemented.

But the Palestinians, for all their anger and resentment, were being supremely careful not to risk a rupture.

And the Israelis, too, were equally careful not to be a spoiler, despite the Netanyahu government's need to mollify the hard-core right.

The reason: Clinton's visit during the third week of December.

The president is scheduled to land at the airport in southern Gaza, in what is being seen as a dramatic act of encouragement for Palestinian national aspirations. After

MIDEAST FOCUS

Premier meets religious leaders

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with the heads of Israel's religious parties to avert a coalition showdown over a recent Supreme Court ruling that non-Orthodox representatives must be included on local religious councils. The parties had threatened to leave the governing coalition after the ruling, but during the talks with the premier, the party leaders said they would instead seek to diminish the councils' responsibilities and authority.

Israeli-Syrian talks may restart

The United States wants to revive Israeli-Syrian negotiations through private discussions, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman indicated.

David Bar-Illan also said the final-status negotiations with the Palestinian Authority would take a long time, despite Palestinian demands that they be concluded by next May, when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has said he would declare a Palestinian state.

Deputy mayor offers apology

Jerusalem's deputy mayor issued an apology after he was quoted in a newspaper as saying that Russian immigrants were bad for Israel. Haim Miller said his remarks had been taken out of context.

The reporter who interviewed him played a tape before a Knesset committee, and the fervently Orthodox politician could be heard denouncing the immigrant population as having brought "corruption and pork" into Israel.

Arafat flies from Gaza airport

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat flew to Paris on his first flight from the new airport in the Gaza Strip. Israeli officials, who have overall security responsibility for the airport, watched from the runway as Arafat's plane took off. Before the new airport was inaugurated, Arafat had to travel to Egypt in order to fly abroad.



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more than a year of delays, the airport opened Tuesday.

The American president's speech next month to thousands of Palestinian representatives in Gaza — among them the members of the Palestine National Council — will furnish the occasion for revoking the Palestinian Covenant, as called for under the Wye accord.

The assembled delegates will vote by acclamation to abrogate the clauses of the document, originally published in 1964, that call for the eradication of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine.

It will not be quite the formal revocation by the PNC itself that Israel had demanded.

But, given Clinton's personal involvement, Jerusalem will have to swallow its reservations.

The same applies to all the arguments presented by the two sides in the period leading up to the presidential visit.

Barring a major act of terrorism that takes many Israeli lives, the weeks ahead hold out the prospect of much lip-biting, as the two sides repress some of the outbursts of anger that have become a routine part of their negotiations.

Behind the verbal fights this week, there seemed to be a nod-and-wink understanding between the two sides that much of the rhetoric is designed for domestic political purposes.

When Israel released a group of prisoners last Friday — another move called for under the terms of the accord — Palestinian officials insisted that they would not accept the release of common criminals.

They wanted political detainees to be freed, saying this was called for under the terms of the accord.

Netanyahu, for his part, insisted that Israel would not free Hamas activists, and certainly no one with blood on his hands.

His denial that he had violated the Wye agreement was upheld by a U.S. Embassy spokesperson, who issued a statement saying the United States was unaware of any violation of the accord regarding the releases.

But, for all the protestations on both sides, some 100 political prisoners were among the 250 freed.

The Palestinians and their close allies, the Arab parties in the Knesset, make no bones about their hope that Netanyahu can hold his government together for the duration of the 12-week implementation period.

Their implicit message: If that requires throwing sops to the Israeli right — then, up to a point, so be it.

There is serious bitterness on the Palestinian side over Israeli plans to expropriate land to make room for more than a dozen bypass roads, which are designed to help Jewish settlers travel through the West Bank without having to traverse Palestinian villages.

One proposed road near Hebron, has aroused controversy within the Israeli Cabinet.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon is pushing for the plan while Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, heeding warnings from the army, opposes it.

The Palestinians also point to almost nightly land-grabs by settlers on hilltops near their settlements. Some of these are quickly quelled by the army and the police. Others are ignored.

Sharon has openly urged the settlers to seize what they can — which has provoked more than a few protests from Palestinian officials.

But even these protests are clearly being held in check.

The Palestinians are waiting for Clinton to land at their new airport. □

Rescued Israeli hikers ate ants

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two Israeli hikers lost in a forest in Chile survived for three weeks on ants and water until they were recently rescued by helicopter.

The two got lost during what was supposed to be a three-day trek through a national park in the highlands of Chile. □

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss criticize trip's cancellation

The Swiss government and Jewish leaders there criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for canceling a planned visit to the Alpine nation.

A spokesman for the Swiss Foreign Ministry said Netanyahu's decision would further strain bilateral relations, already damaged by Israel's staunch support for those calling on Switzerland to return assets belonging to Holocaust victims. Netanyahu said he canceled the visit to deal with domestic concerns.

Pope plans new Holocaust report

Pope John Paul II will expand on a recent report dealing with Catholic responsibility for the Holocaust, a Catholic cardinal told a group of Jewish leaders.

But Roger Mahony said he doubted that the pope would condemn Catholics by name. Mahony added that the church would expand Holocaust education in its schools and religious education programs.

Lawmakers seek resolution

Some U.S. lawmakers are trying to gain support for a resolution calling on President Clinton to unequivocally state that the United States will actively oppose a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. House Majority Whip Rep. Tom Delay (R-Texas) and Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.) are circulating a letter stating that Clinton has "failed to communicate our opposition to such a provocative action."

They said they will introduce the resolution when Congress returns in January.

B'nai B'rith nominates Hussein

B'nai B'rith International nominated Jordan's King Hussein for a Nobel Peace Prize.

In nominating the king, who has been undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, the group cited his "personal participation" in the negotiations that led to the Wye agreement last month.

Mayor weighs in on memorial

The mayor of Berlin backed a proposal to make director Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation video library part of Germany's planned national Holocaust memorial. Eberhard Diepgen said a memorial where visitors could learn about the Holocaust was a better idea than the current proposal for a mammoth-scale, more abstract monument.

Documents reveal Peron's role

A former Argentine leader was more involved in efforts to bring Nazis to his country than previously believed. According to recently discovered documents, Juan Peron helped create the organization that facilitated the immigration of these war criminals into his country after World War II.

Russian lawmaker's death 'irreplaceable loss for Jews'

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jews in Russia and their supporters overseas are viewing the murder of liberal lawmaker Galina Starovoitova as a setback for human rights and the rule of law in Russia.

"Her death is an irreplaceable loss for Jews in Russia, as well as a heavy loss for all liberal-thinking Russians," said Mikhail Vol, 62, a physicist who was among the more than 2,000 residents of Moscow who gathered in Pushkin Square on a bitter cold Tuesday evening to pay their respects.

The 52-year-old Starovoitova, a longtime supporter of Jewish causes and critic of anti-Semitism who was gunned down last Friday night in her St. Petersburg apartment building, was buried there Tuesday in the cemetery where such famous Russians as the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and the composer Peter Tchaikovsky are buried.

Nearly all major politicians agreed that her death was a political assassination — although who exactly was behind the murder is still open to debate.

Starovoitova had recently been one of the harshest critics of Communist lawmaker Gen. Albert Makashov, who recently made several public anti-Semitic statements.

Starovoitova had also crossed paths with ultranationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy by announcing in September that if Zhirinovskiy ran for governor of the region that includes St. Petersburg, she would run against him.

Starovoitova also planned to run for president in 2000.

These facts led some to suggest that Russian ultranationalists were behind her death.

But her outspokenness in support of human rights and minorities had earned her many enemies.

Some believe her assassination was linked to elections for the St. Petersburg city legislature, which are slated for Dec. 6. Starovoitova had publicly allied with candidates who criticized the city's governor, Vladimir Yakovlev, and who tried to reduce his power by organizing an alternative slate of candidates to unite liberals in an ugly contest for control over the city's legislature.

Starovoitova, who was not Jewish, had long been known as a good friend of the Jewish community. In 1988, she was one of the organizers of the Jewish Culture Association, the first legal Jewish organization established during the era of Mikhail Gorbachev.

She worked "to make glasnost and perestroika mean something," Mark Levin, executive director of the National Council on Soviet Jewry, said in Washington. Levin said he was honored to consider Starovoitova a friend.

"There have always been courageous people throughout Russian history. She'll always be remembered as one of the most courageous. Hopefully, there will always be those who emulate her path and work to achieve a society governed by the rule of law," he said.

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, which monitors human rights in the former Soviet Union, said in a statement that it mourned the death of Starovoitova.

An early supporter of President Boris Yeltsin, Starovoitova helped to create a new Jewish university, the State Maimonides Academy in Moscow, when she was Yeltsin's aide on ethnic affairs in 1991 and 1992.

She was also one of the few Russian lawmakers who participated in the second convention of the Russian Jewish Congress held last September.

Mikhail Chlenov, president of the Va'ad — The Jewish Federation of Russia and a friend of Starovoitova for 20 years, said many of the Jewish community's achievements in the 1980s and 1990s would have been impossible without her efforts.

"She was probably the last of this type of democratic politicians who helped to bury Communism in the late 1980s," said Konstantin Orlov, a medical student who also paid his respects to Starovoitova on Tuesday.

"I hope her death will help healthy forces in Russia to unite in her name against growing nationalist and Communist threats and intolerance." □

David Levy rejoins coalition; may presage unity government

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Former Foreign Minister David Levy's decision to rejoin Israel's Likud-led coalition is being seen as strengthening Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's position in any negotiations over the creation of a national unity government.

Cabinet ministers Ariel Sharon, Natan Sharansky and Ya'acov Ne'eman are backing the formation of such a government with the opposition Labor Party. Ne'eman said he would step down as finance minister if that would facilitate negotiations with Labor. Labor officials, however, say they remain opposed to joining a unity government.

It remains unclear which portfolio Levy will assume, with the finance or national infrastructure ministries current possibilities.

The infrastructure portfolio was given up recently by Ariel Sharon when he was named foreign minister in place of Levy, who resigned from the government in January over much-publicized disagreements with Netanyahu, his old political rival.

Under the emerging deal, Levy's Geshet Party, which is a breakaway from Likud, would be reintegrated into the party, gaining several hundred seats within Likud's Central Committee.

In addition, the state budget, which is still up for final Knesset approval, would reflect social spending issues — the very issues whose lack of implementation in the present budget spurred Levy's resignation from the coalition earlier this year.

Netanyahu touted the reunion with Levy and Geshet, announced Wednesday, as a way to widen the coalition base for implementation of the Wye accord.

But reaction to the move was mixed.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai welcomed it as a step that would strengthen the coalition.

But Knesset member Benny Begin, one of Netanyahu's harshest critics, strongly objected to the deal, but said that the demise of the Likud was already under way.

The Likud Party, Begin told Israel Radio, has "turned into a tool of the Labor Party's plans. It is an unimportant, uninteresting, irrelevant party that is swayed by events and polls." □

44 nations to gather in D.C. to discuss Holocaust assets

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At the conclusion of last year's historic conference on Nazi gold, the United States called on the 42 nations gathered in London to act by the end of the century to bring closure to all issues related to the fate of Holocaust-era assets.

The intervening year has yielded significant progress toward that goal — most notably the \$1.25 billion settlement with Swiss banks.

But as the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum prepare to host a follow-up to the London conference here next week, the work remains far from complete.

The Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets, which again is expected to bring together delegates from 44 countries, including representatives of Jewish organizations and the survivor

community, will delve into categories of looted assets that have not been as exhaustively explored as gold and missing bank accounts — namely artworks and insurance policies.

The stated goals of the conference include sharing scholarly research related to Holocaust assets, prodding governments to search through and open all relevant archival records, and developing a broad consensus on future compensation efforts.

While it remains to be seen how much substantive progress can be achieved, for many Jewish officials the central question is not what happens at the conference, but what happens after.

"The concern is that momentum will be lost and, more importantly, that the practical implementation of whatever proposals or policies are considered will no longer be part of the ongoing international agenda," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

To protect against that, the WJC plans to call on nations that had dealings with Nazi Germany to take concrete steps to resolve Holocaust-era claims by providing a full accounting of all confiscated Jewish assets and establishing guidelines to compensate Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

The WJC, offering what may be a more realistic goal than the one set by the United States last year, wants to see that accomplished in the next two years, with the entire claims process wrapped up within the next five years.

To be sure, major progress has been made in the three years since the search for Holocaust victims' assets began with Swiss bank accounts. The Swiss bank settlement, coupled with the various humanitarian funds that have been established, has already placed more than \$1.6 billion in the pipeline for Holocaust survivors.

Although only a small fraction of those funds has yet been made available — it will be about a year still before survivors can expect to receive payments from the Swiss settlement — when all is said and done, restitution payments are likely to amount to hundreds of millions of dollars more.

European insurance firms have already agreed to set up a \$90 million escrow fund, and more is expected to come as an international commission of insurance officials and Jewish representatives investigates the archives of the companies and establishes a mechanism for repaying claims.

There are also untold fortunes tied to tens of thousands of looted artworks, many of them masterpieces, seized by the Nazis during their march across Europe.

So far, researchers and museum officials have identified many of the stolen pieces, although scant progress has been made in developing a plan for restitution.

But for all the focus on material claims, many of those involved in the restitution battle have been stressing that money must not be the last word on the Holocaust. Indeed, some Jewish leaders have cautioned that focusing exclusively on financial matters as the century comes to a close risks damaging the memory of the Holocaust.

"One has to be very careful," said Abraham Foxman, a Holocaust survivor who is the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, "so as not to deliver a message that this is the last chapter (of the Holocaust), you pay the bill, you close the books."

Next week's conference intends to address the problem by proposing an innovative plan to promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance around the world. □