



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Clinton fails to budge premier

President Clinton failed to persuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to meet a Friday deadline for the next redeployment in the West Bank. Nonetheless, Clinton said, "I have achieved what I came here to achieve" after meeting with Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at a crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip. [Page 1]

### Clinton remark draws ire

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized President Clinton for equating the children of Palestinians jailed for murder with the children of Israeli victims of terror. His comments came after Clinton, who had met with Israeli and Palestinian children during his visit to the region, told a meeting of Palestinian representatives in the Gaza Strip, "We have to find a way for both sets of children to get their lives back and go forward."

### Pentagon warns of terror attack

A terrorist attack in the Persian Gulf is "imminent," the Pentagon warned. The United States is now operating under one of the highest states of alert, "Threatcon Charlie," which indicates an attack has occurred or that intelligence officials have received information "indicating that some form of terrorist action is imminent." A separate travel warning issued in October advising American citizens not to visit Israel remains in effect, the State Department said. The alert is believed to be linked to the terrorist Osama bin Laden, who the United States believes is responsible for bombing two U.S. embassies earlier this year.

### Israeli finance minister resigns

Israel's finance minister resigned. The move by Ya'acov Ne'eman was taken by some Israeli commentators as a sign of the further weakening of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

### Russian lawmaker blames Jews

A prominent member of the Russian Parliament blamed influential Jews in President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle for the "genocide" of ethnic Russians since the collapse of communism. Communist Party legislator Viktor Ilyukhin made this comment at a session of a commission created by members of the Parliament who want to impeach Yeltsin.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Netanyahu scores wins too, but will they save coalition?

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — While President Clinton's Middle East visit is widely seen as a major success for the Palestinians, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also claiming victory.

But it remains unclear whether these claimed victories will enable the premier to survive a knife-edge vote of no-confidence that is scheduled for next Monday in the Knesset.

On the face of it, Clinton's visit may have gone well for Netanyahu, who is now claiming two successes:

- Palestinian officials, with the entire world watching, annulled the clauses in their national covenant that called for Israel's destruction. This had long been Netanyahu's demand, and it represented one of his conditions for further progress in the peace process.

- Netanyahu made no new concessions to Clinton and succeeded in postponing the next redeployment in the West Bank, which was supposed to take place Friday.

By making no new concessions, Netanyahu can now urge hard-liners in his coalition to support him and not carry out their earlier threats to side with the Labor-led opposition in Monday's Knesset vote.

But many Israeli observers are interpreting these successes as short-lived tactical triumphs.

Taking a longer view, they say the Clinton visit has resulted in serious and lasting setbacks, both for Netanyahu and for Israel.

Granted, they add, members of the Palestine National Council and other Palestinian groups did indeed revoke their charter during a historic meeting Monday in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli premier has made a point of claiming credit for the move, saying it only came about as a result of his unflinching stance during months of frustrating negotiations.

But in legal substance, these observers point out, the step taken at the Gaza meeting was a duplication of the PNC's original act of annulling the charter in April 1996, a step that Netanyahu has repeatedly dismissed.

More significantly, the latest act of annulment is being seen in the Palestinian territories — and indeed around the world — as a giant step toward the very Palestinian independence that the Israeli leader so strongly opposes.

The U.S. president's presence at Monday's vote, his quasi-state visit to the Gaza Strip and his statements aimed at recognizing Palestinian sensibilities as much as Israeli concerns — these were all seen as huge successes for Arafat and for the Palestinian cause that, in time, will dwarf Netanyahu's ostensible achievement in getting the charter re-annulled.

The Israeli media, describing Clinton's visit to Gaza as a milestone in the annals of Palestinian nationalism, made comparisons with momentous events in the history of Zionism — the First Zionist Congress of 1897 and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 among them.

And in terms of relations between leaders and governments, the president and his aides stopped even the attempt of concealing their profound differences with Netanyahu. This was starkly apparent in Clinton's repeated assertion to the assembled

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak: Set date for elections

Israeli Labor Party leader Ehud Barak called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to meet with him and agree to a date for early elections.

Barak's appeal came one week before a no-confidence motion in the Knesset that hard-liners in Netanyahu's government have threatened to support. Meanwhile, a team of leading American political consultants hired to advise Barak, including President Clinton's adviser James Carville, arrived in Israel.

### Avital extends leave

A two-week suspension of an Israeli Foreign Ministry official ended. But Colette Avital, Israel's former consul general in New York, has agreed to extend her leave until the end of a police investigation into allegations that she leaked a classified document to the media.

Police have yet to find any evidence that Avital provided an Israeli newspaper with an internal document on possible Israeli responses to a unilateral declaration by the Palestinians of an independent state.

### Albright visits Jordan

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright traveled to Amman to brief Jordanian officials on President Clinton's visit to the region.

Crown Prince Hassan reportedly welcomed the Palestinian vote the previous day reaffirming the cancellation of the anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian charter.

### U.N. chief urges prisoner release

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged Israel to continue releasing Palestinian prisoners in accordance with the latest peace deal. In a recent meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, Annan also asked Israel to stop building new settlements.

Palestinian representatives in Gaza City that their action on the Palestinian Covenant would speak to the hearts of the people of the Jewish state — rather than to their government.

On the domestic level, too, Netanyahu's lurch to the right may prove a success of short-lived duration.

It may carry through Netanyahu next Monday's Knesset vote, but rumblings among the more moderate elements in the Israeli prime minister's coalition are already discernible.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who finds himself increasingly outflanked by the tough-talking Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, is saying he will "reconsider" the state of the government.

Mordechai's top generals and senior officials of the Shin Bet domestic security agency are known to favor a softer line on the issue of prisoner release than that advocated by Netanyahu and Sharon.

The prisoner issue, more than any other item of dispute, has soured the atmosphere — and ignited the Palestinian streets — in the weeks since the Wye agreement was signed in late October.

Clinton, throughout his visit, pressed Netanyahu to retreat from his stance that no prisoners who have blood on their hands or are members of the militant Hamas movement would be freed.

The premier refused to relent, and he is now making much political capital out of that refusal.

But Mordechai and the relatively moderate Third Way Party, another coalition partner, have yet to say how they feel about the virtual collapse of the implementation of the Wye accord.

Netanyahu's aides were hinting this week that the premier himself may call for early elections, a move that would spare him the possibility of suffering a humiliating defeat in the Knesset.

These hints were perhaps intended to whip shaky coalition members back into line so that the Likud leader can regroup and carry on.

But they could also mean that Netanyahu has come to believe, after a hard-headed assessment of the government's inherent weakness, that the end is near.

Either way, the prime minister is now clearly determined to head off any challenge against his leadership from the right-wing "national camp."

Whether Netanyahu stays in office or seeks early elections, he will project himself as the leader who refused to give ground to Arafat and the Palestinians, despite intensive, almost public pressure from no less a figure than the president of the United States.

Where does all this leave the peace process?

Despite brave attempts by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to claim some progress during the president's three days in the region, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are making no such pretense.

Despite the move to annul the charter, Israel is flatly refusing to carry out any further redeployments until the Palestinian Authority carries out further obligations — including the confiscation of weapons, the elimination of anti-Israel rhetoric from schoolbooks, ending incitement and retracting the threat to declare statehood unilaterally next May.

For their part, Palestinian officials are saying these demands reflect nothing more than Netanyahu's desire to survive the Knesset vote.

As Clinton flew home to face his own domestic battles, it appeared more likely that there would be renewed violent confrontations than any further progress in implementing the Wye accord in the weeks ahead.

And as far as the future of the Netanyahu government is concerned, there was a telling moment in Clinton's schedule before leaving the region Tuesday.

After the summit with Netanyahu and Arafat, Clinton and his family visited Bethlehem and Masada.

From there they went to Ben-Gurion Airport, where the president held separate meetings on the tarmac with Netanyahu and another Israeli politician: opposition leader Ehud Barak of the Labor Party. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### U.S. lawmakers press Yeltsin

Some 31 members of the U.S. Congress urged Russian President Boris Yeltsin to step up his efforts to halt the spread of anti-Semitism in Russia.

Making specific reference to several recent anti-Semitic statements made by Communist lawmaker Albert Makashov, a letter signed by the congressmen urged Yeltsin to "do your utmost to show" that his government will not "tolerate the scapegoating of one ethnic population for the complex economic problems of an entire nation."

It added that charges should be brought against those inciting "hatred and violence."

Meanwhile, anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed by mail in the southern Russian city of Krasnodar.

The leaflets, calling for pogroms and the expulsion of Jews, also urged the region's governor, Nikolai Kondratenko, to run for president of Russia. Kondratenko has repeatedly made anti-Semitic, racist and anti-Western statements.

### Croatia indicts camp commander

A commander of Croatia's most notorious concentration camp during World War II was indicted for war crimes. The move came six months after Dinko Sakic was extradited from Argentina.

Sakic was charged with the deaths of more than 2,000 people when he was at the Jasenovac concentration camp.

### Wiesel supports Clinton

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel joined hundreds of supporters of President Clinton at a rally in New York City urging the U.S. House of Representatives not to vote for impeachment. "Like everything else, humiliation must have its limits," Wiesel told the gathering at New York University.

### Palestinian released from U.S. jail

A Palestinian who refused to testify before a U.S. federal grand jury was released from jail. Ismail Elbarasse, who served eight months for contempt of court, is the second Palestinian suspected of illegal money laundering to support terrorist activities to be released during the past four months.

The judge who freed Elbarasse said further incarceration would not convince the alleged Hamas operative to testify, but he left open the possibility of bringing other contempt charges against both men.

### Moscow bans neo-Nazi meeting

The mayor of Moscow banned a neo-Nazi gathering scheduled to take place there in the coming days. But a spokesman for Russian National Unity, the largest ultranationalist group in the country, said the organization would ignore Yuri Luzhkov's ban.

## German Jewish leader, author meet to resolve Holocaust debate

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — After tossing public verbal accusations at each other for two months, a German Jewish leader and a leading German novelist have finally met to discuss their opposing views on preserving the memory of the Holocaust.

And though the personal relationship between Ignatz Bubis and Martin Walser improved during their four-hour talk last weekend, the two remained radically at odds on public commemoration of the Holocaust and Holocaust education.

The conflict between the two 71-year-old men, which has received extensive attention in the German media, reflects a growing debate among Germans over how to commemorate the Shoah.

Their tensions erupted after Walser's nationally televised acceptance speech for a prize he was awarded at a book fair in mid-October.

In the speech, Walser lashed out at the current approach to Holocaust commemoration in Germany, arguing it was time to let Germany become a normal nation without constant public reminders of Auschwitz.

He criticized the proposed Holocaust monument in Berlin, which has been mired in controversy for a decade, as a "nightmare," and said he has begun to look away from film scenes of Auschwitz.

Most people in the audience, including leading politicians and intellectuals, applauded.

But Bubis, who was visibly horrified, called Walser a "moral arsonist" who was opening doors for right-wing extremists in Germany who favor an end to public discussion on Holocaust commemoration. He also called him a latent anti-Semite.

Until this past weekend, Walser declined to meet face to face with Bubis, complaining that the charges against him were too exaggerated to warrant discussion. He also refused to clarify controversial passages of his speech despite requests by the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and Avi Primor, the Israeli ambassador to Germany.

But both men agreed to meet in the offices of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper, which subsequently published a transcript of the discussion.

For most of the talk, the atmosphere was frosty.

Bubis retracted his charge that Walser is a moral arsonist whose position is similar to that of some right-wing extremists.

Still, Bubis insisted that those who seek closure to the discussion about German guilt for the Holocaust will now consider Walser a "spiritual father," pointing out that the far-right press in Germany has praised the novelist's speech.

Bubis also said that given Walser's prominence as a novelist in Germany, his plea for "looking away" from the Holocaust could encourage many others to do the same.

Walser admitted that he spoke too little about the necessity for public commemoration in his speech.

But the novelist repeated his plea for a more private confrontation with the Holocaust.

He said official acts of public commemoration can easily degenerate into meaningless ritual and do not serve to develop the conscience of young people.

Instead, Walser argued that this is the job of the family, religious leaders and teachers.

Walser, who lives in Bavaria in southern Germany, is a former left-wing intellectual who has expressed growing nationalist sentiments in recent years.

He complained that Germany continues to be treated by the world as a criminal nation that constantly has to prove that it is ready to rejoin the civilization.

In the end, the two men found little common ground except to agree that their dispute has unleashed an important public debate in Germany on the forms of Holocaust commemoration.

But the head of the Berlin Jewish community, Andreas Nachama, said it is a positive sign that differing views on Holocaust commemoration are being seriously discussed in Germany. □

**AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD****Vast collection of Jewish art housed in Moscow apartment***By Lev Krichevsky*

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Museum of Contemporary Jewish Art is not listed in museum directories and tourist guidebooks.

But this unassuming museum, located in a small apartment in an ordinary, five-story building on the outskirts of Moscow, still draws hundreds of visitors every year — ranging from students in the city's Jewish schools, other Jewish residents of Moscow and foreign tourists.

The exhibition occupies no more than 435 square feet in the two-bedroom apartment where Alexander Filzer lives with his wife and teen-age daughter.

But what Filzer has amassed is a remarkable collection of paintings, drawings, prints and decorative art.

It is nothing less than a catalog of the independent Jewish artistic movement in the Soviet Union since World War II.

The works are displayed close together, from the floor to the ceiling, in two rooms. The mostly unframed canvases hang alongside short descriptions of the works and small photos and brief bios of the artists.

Russian Jewish culture is presented here in all its variety. There are portraits of Jewish authors and actors, images of Jewish life in small towns, illustrations to famous works by Yiddish writers, biblical scenes, sketches of stage costumes and set ideas from the Moscow Jewish Theater, avant-garde paintings whose authors often admired the aesthetic beauty of the Hebrew alphabet.

The quality of the works vary widely. Beside works by masters such as Tanhum Kaplan, Me'er Axelrod and Gersh Inger, whose works are found in other collections in Russia and the West, there are pieces by lesser-known artists also on display.

After World War II, the Jewish population in the Soviet Union "created its own art, which remained unknown both here and in the West," says Filzer.

"Soviet Jewish culture of the prewar period is better known. Very few are aware, though, that it continued to exist when most of it was forced to go underground," Filzer says, referring to the years after World War II, when authorities put a virtual ban on Soviet Jewish artistic expression.

A few decades ago, "most of the artists could not even dream of the possibility of exhibiting their art in this country."

Filzer took the matter into his own hands.

An active participant in the Jewish dissident movement, he abandoned his job as an engineer and started his collection in the early 1970s.

The task was made easier because his house served as a fulcrum for members of the independent Jewish artistic community — his wife and some relatives are professional artists.

"The exchange of ideas between these artists was hampered because Jewish artists often didn't know about each other. And naturally, their art remained unknown to the public since it was barred from official exhibitions," Filzer says.

In 1977, the unofficial museum opened.

Then the visitors were mostly artists themselves, Jewish underground activists and refuseniks such as Yosef Begun, a famous Prisoner of Zion.

"What had been created here between the 50s and 80s is an art very different from traditional Jewish art. Yet it's very Jewish in its themes, imagery, mood and essence," he says.

In fact, the museum itself stands today as a reminder of the underground Jewish culture of the late Soviet era, when all Jewish activities were confined to apartments like the one that houses Filzer's collection.

As with any private collection, Filzer's museum reflects its founder's taste.

Yet the museum has been instrumental in propagating Jewish culture and art among Jews both during the Soviet era and in post-Communist Russia.

During the policy of glasnost, or openness, instituted by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s, the museum became known to a growing number of Jews.

Admission to the museum is free and can be arranged by appointment. Filzer receives several phone calls daily from those interested in visiting.

"I don't know how exactly they learn about the museum," says Filzer. "I believe that mostly they hear about it by word of mouth."

The collection is not limited to the works of more than 60 artists from different parts of the former Soviet Union.

"When I built a large collection of Soviet-era art, many visitors who were new to Judaism would often ask me what Jewish art was like before the Soviet Union," Filzer says.

These questions led Filzer to establish a collection of religious Jewish art. Dozens of Jewish ritual objects such as Torah covers and crowns, mezuzot, Passover cups and challah plates were purchased from elderly people who had these pieces in their families for generations.

This year, Filzer turned this part of the museum over to a new Moscow synagogue. The memorial synagogue inside the World War II park on Poklonnaya Gora also houses a Holocaust museum and an exhibition on the history of Russian Jewry.

Filzer also has an extensive collection of photographs of Jewish life in Imperial and Soviet Russia.

Dozens of photographs, which Filzer found in family and synagogue archives, became the basis for a one-of-a-kind traveling photo exhibition that in recent years was shown in Moscow and Ukraine.

"It is important to educate Jews about their people's past in this country," says Filzer. "Photographs are one of the most effective ways to show what Jewish life was like generations ago."

Today, Filzer is working on a manuscript of the first comprehensive history of Jewish art in the Soviet Union.

Although some Russian Jewish artists continue to explore Jewish themes today, Filzer is pessimistic about the future of such art here.

The idea of the museum, he says, "was to demonstrate that Jewish spirit was alive despite all difficulties."

"Today, in free Russia, it would be natural to assume that Jewish art would flourish. But this is not exactly what's happening. The older generation of artists — those who remembered what the cheder or the chupah were like — is almost all gone," he says referring to Jewish elementary school and the canopy at a traditional wedding ceremony.

"The younger artists are emigrating. What is being done now is a totally new and different chapter in the history of Russian Jewish culture. I'm not sure whether it is going to last long." □