



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 226

Thursday, December 17, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Jewish leaders back bombing

American Jewish leaders put their support behind the coordinated U.S.-British bombing of Iraq. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations issued a letter to President Clinton expressing "total support" for his administration's "decisive action." U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright planned to brief American Jewish leaders in a conference call Wednesday evening.

In a televised address to the nation, Clinton vowed that if Saddam Hussein "lashes out at his neighbors, we will respond forcefully."

Netanyahu may seek elections

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will seek support for his policies in the Knesset on Monday. If that fails, Netanyahu announced he will resign and seek new elections. [Page 3]

U.S. to Israel: Redeploy

Israel should implement the Wye peace accord as scheduled even if the Israeli government falls, the U.S. State Department said. "The Wye agreement was approved by both the Israeli government and the Knesset. Consistent with that, we feel it should be carried out and implemented as agreed," said State Department spokesman James Rubin.

He also called on Israel to reverse course and fulfill its promise to redeploy Friday from an additional 5 percent of the West Bank.

Russian liberals slam Communist

Liberal members of the Russian Parliament called for a resolution denouncing an anti-Semitic statement made by a prominent member of that body.

The move came after Communist Party legislator Viktor Ilyukhin blamed influential Jews in President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle for the "genocide" of ethnic Russians since the collapse of communism. [Page 4]

German compensation stalls

A proposed fund in Germany to compensate Holocaust survivors apparently stalled because the firms involved cannot agree on whether there should be one fund or two.

The monies would go to those who worked as slave laborers during World War II and those whose assets were looted by German insurers and banks.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Clinton boost to Palestinians: Will it come at Israel's expense?

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Clinton's visit to Gaza and Bethlehem this week solidified the Palestinians' standing as friends of the United States.

But the visit — the first by an American president to the Palestinian self-rule areas — has triggered concern in the Jewish community that this new friendship will come at the expense of America's historic "special relationship" with Israel.

Clinton's comments and the symbolism of the visit were widely interpreted as a boost to the Palestinian quest for statehood. For the first time in his administration, the president adopted the language of the Camp David accords calling for the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinians consider the phrase a code word for statehood.

The Palestinians "now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land," Clinton said in Gaza on a trip with all the trappings of a formal state visit.

Turning the tables on Israel, which had labored for decades to convince the Arabs to negotiate peace, the president told the Palestinians they had "issued a challenge to the government of Israel to walk down that path with you."

The burgeoning U.S.-Palestinian relationship could mean continued rocky times for Israel if Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat continues to capitalize on the cool relations between Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"For friends of Israel, there is something very sad" about Clinton's visit, Henry Siegman, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in an op-ed piece on the eve of the president's trip.

"The visit should have been a glorious occasion, marking not only Israel's 50th anniversary but also an extraordinary relationship between the world's only remaining superpower and the diminutive but vigorous Jewish democratic state," he wrote.

"But instead of marking a celebration, or serving as an occasion for Israel to express its gratitude to the American people for the constancy of their support, and to a president recognized universally as 'the best friend Israel ever had in the White House,' this visit will take place in a contentious and ugly atmosphere that dramatizes, above all, the deterioration in the relationship."

Many longtime Jewish activists have begun to focus on how this deterioration, coupled with the growing Arafat-Clinton relationship, will affect Israel.

"Ultimately I think it will be troublesome," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. "I have that queasy feeling" that the improved American-Palestinian relationship "may be done at the expense of the special relationship with Israel."

In fact, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee has already begun to lay the groundwork to lobby Congress to serve as a counterweight against the Clinton administration on critical final-status issues, including statehood.

While Israel may lose some short-term battles, some Middle East analysts believe the Jewish state's special alliance with the United States is not in jeopardy.

The U.S.-Israel relationship is "something quite extraordinary and unique in the annals of diplomacy," said Daniel Pipes, editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*.

In fact, this week's trip is Clinton's fourth to Israel since becoming president. He is the only president to visit Israel more than once while in office, the White House pointed out. "America's relations with Arabs have gone up and down, and have not

MIDEAST FOCUS

Violence may erupt in West Bank

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said his country's security forces were prepared for a possible increase in violence in the West Bank as a result of the breakdown of the implementation of the Wye agreement.

The violence that preceded President Clinton's visit and which left four Palestinians dead has subsided in recent days.

Prisoners end hunger strike

Palestinian prisoners ended a 20-day hunger strike after declaring success in raising international awareness of their plight. Meanwhile, prisoners in a Palestinian jail in the West Bank reportedly began a hunger strike of their own to protest their being held without trial.

Peres: Spies were halting terror

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres said two Israelis charged with spying in Cyprus were trying to stop a terrorist act against the Jewish state.

The arrest of the two Mossad agents has fueled suspicion that the men were acting on behalf of Turkey.

Arafat meets with Mubarak

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The two leaders discussed President Clinton's recent visit to Israel and the Gaza Strip and the state of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Tel Aviv man chokes on doughnut

An 85-year-old Tel Aviv man was listed in stable condition after choking on a jelly donut, one of the traditional foods eaten during Chanukah. Rescue officials said a piece of the donut became lodged in the windpipe of the victim, who was unconscious when emergency teams arrived.

fundamentally affected the U.S.-Israel relationship," Pipes said.

"I'm concerned about the short-term tactical relationship but not the long-term strategic" one, said Pipes, who is predicting a confrontation between the United States and Israel on the peace process.

If this week's trip is any indication, the Palestinians will continue to score points at Israel's expense. Instead of improving relations between the United States and Israel, Clinton's trip heightened tensions with Netanyahu.

The two leaders sparred over Israel's suspension of the Wye peace accords, with the United States openly accusing the Jewish state of imposing new conditions on the Palestinians not agreed to at the negotiating table.

The largest flare-up came over the explosive issue of Palestinian prisoners.

Israel has refused to release prisoners with "blood on their hands" and freed 150 common criminals in the first round of releases it agreed to with the Palestinians.

While the United States has sided with Israel in the dispute over the release, Clinton gave Palestinians a presidential endorsement on the larger issue by equating the Israeli orphans of terror with prisoners' families.

The president spoke movingly of four Palestinian children he met who pleaded with him to help convince Israel to release their fathers from Israeli prisons.

"Would you forget your daughter?" Nihad Zakout, 11, asked the president in an emotional plea to pressure Israel to release her father.

"No, not for one second," Clinton responded, telling the girl, "Your father will be very proud of you."

The exchange moved U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to tears.

In a speech to the Palestinians, Clinton compared the children to a group of Israeli children he said he had met the night before whose fathers were killed by Palestinians.

"Both children brought tears to my eyes. We have to find a way for both sets of children to get their lives back and to go forward," Clinton said. "We must acknowledge that neither side has a monopoly on pain or virtue."

The remarks incensed Netanyahu, who was quick to point out that the 11-year-old's father is serving a life sentence for killing an Israeli.

The prime minister reportedly reminded Albright that at least the fathers of the Palestinian children are alive. The same could not be said for the Israeli children's parents, he told the secretary of state, according to Israeli officials.

To drive his point home, the Israeli premier asked Albright if the United States would release the terrorists jailed for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

"Of course, there is no symmetry between us and the Palestinians. It is not us who sent out murderers, not us who sent out car bombs," Netanyahu told reporters after Clinton's speech. "The place for someone who kills innocent people is behind bars," he said.

Albright later sought to calm frayed nerves telling reporters that Clinton was "drawing the parallel of the children being in pain, and the fact that there were tears by both groups of children."

"In no way did he draw any parallel about the cause of the pain, because the president has made very clear that there is no room for terrorism or murder," she said.

But the exchange did little to satisfy Netanyahu, who raised the matter directly with Clinton on Tuesday.

The unusually sharp exchanges came on the heels of other Clinton comments that angered the Israelis. As Netanyahu continued to seek Palestinian commitments not to declare Palestinian statehood and to stop calling for Israel to cede part of Jerusalem, Clinton said, "Neither side should try to stop the other from saying what their vision of the future is. That would be a terrible mistake."

When asked at a news conference if he was sacrificing Israel's relationship with the United States to keep his coalition together, the Likud leader said, "We are not engaged in a confrontation with the United States and President Clinton."

Netanyahu likely got little comfort from Clinton's story that his pastor told him that if he ever became president, "you will make mistakes and God will forgive you. But God will never forgive you if you forget the State of Israel."

Turning to the Israeli leader and smiling, Clinton said, "I hesitate to tell it, because then you will use it against me." □



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor (on leave)*
 Kenneth Bandler, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

D'Amato to mediate survivor suit

A New York judge appointed outgoing Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) to be the "special master" in settlement talks between Holocaust survivors and German and Austrian banks being sued for profiting from looted Nazi gold.

D'Amato, who lost his Senate seat in the 1998 elections, helped publicize the Nazi gold issue and pressure Swiss banks to reach a \$1.25 billion settlement on a similar issue.

Family fails to get property

A German court ruled against a Jewish family trying to reclaim property that belonged to the family until the 1930s.

The judges said the Sabersky family voluntarily gave the lot, which lies outside of Berlin, to city authorities in 1933 in exchange for rezoning other property.

The court's ruling is expected to set a precedent for other property that the Sabersky family is trying to regain.

WJC unlikely to block merger

The World Jewish Congress said it is unlikely that it would attempt to block a proposed merger involving a German bank being sued by Holocaust survivors.

A source for the group was quoted as saying that representatives of Deutsche Bank have been "sincere and genuine" in discussions regarding restitution.

Meanwhile, Ed Fagan, a lawyer representing survivors in a suit against the bank released documents he said added further evidence to allegations that the bank profited from assets looted during the Nazi era.

Film on feminist may hit U.S.

A documentary on the life of one of Israel's most prominent feminists may soon be headed to the United States.

"The Annotated Alice," about the life of Alice Shalvi, was screened last week for the first time to a packed audience in Jerusalem.

Shalvi, who escaped from Nazi Germany, founded a prestigious modern Orthodox girls school in Jerusalem, but recently joined the Conservative movement.

Kosher McDonald's opens

McDonald's recently opened a kosher franchise in a Buenos Aires shopping mall.

The restaurant is the first kosher McDonald's outside of Israel.

According to the manager of the restaurant, which is closed for Shabbat, some 2,000 people a day have eaten there since its opening.

Netanyahu ready for new elections if Knesset fails to back peace policy

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to make a last-ditch attempt to regain control of his government came as a constellation of competing political forces threatened to unseat him.

First and foremost was the reaction within his coalition, and even within his own Cabinet, to the Wye accord. The lack of Cabinet support loomed large in the premier's decision to seek backing from the Knesset next week for his stance on the peace process: implementation of Wye, but only if the Palestinian Authority takes further steps to live up to already signed accords.

If Knesset support is lacking, he announced Wednesday, he would call for new elections. The erosion of backing from his own ministers was growing increasingly evident in recent days before one of them, Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman, submitted his resignation on Tuesday. The expectation that a moderate Cabinet member, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, would soon call for early elections provided the final impetus for Netanyahu to go for broke, according to Israeli media reports.

If the matter goes to the Israeli electorate, the peace process will be put on hold until the public is heard from, a senior government official said Wednesday.

But in Washington, the State Department said Israel should implement the Wye accord as scheduled even if Netanyahu's government falls.

"The Wye agreement was approved by both the Israeli government and the Knesset. Consistent with that, we feel it should be carried out and implemented as agreed," said State Department spokesman James Rubin.

Netanyahu's make-or-break attempt to deal with his shaky coalition reflected a calculated political decision. A political strategist of the first order — a talent perhaps borne of necessity, given the coalition he cobbled together upon his election two years ago — Netanyahu had decided that it was better to take the initiative than suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of the legislature.

Indeed, he has now left it to those opposing him from within the coalition to determine whether they really want to risk their Knesset seats in new elections — and also risk a possible incoming Labor government.

Since his election in 1996, Netanyahu has walked a political tightrope as he attempted to meet the competing demands of his coalition, formed of right-wing and religious parties. Matters snowballed with the signing of the Wye agreement in late October, when far-right coalition members threatened to topple the government over the land-for-security deal with the Palestinians.

The situation grew worse when the leftist opposition withdrew a safety net for Netanyahu over the recent lack of progress in the peace process.

Meanwhile, the Orthodox parties in the coalition also threatened to support a no-confidence vote after a series of recent rulings by the High Court of Justice that they said altered the religious status quo.

The coalition disharmony has impeded all areas of government functioning.

Its inability to get parliamentary passage of the state budget, which by law must be approved by Dec. 31, prompted Ne'eman resignation.

Opposition leader Ehud Barak, smelling political blood, waved off the possibility that he would support the creation of a national unity government.

"We're going to elections," he predicted on television. "What kind of unity government can there be with a government that has surrendered to the extremists, smashes the economy, smashes the society, smashes the norms of government?"

Acknowledging that he had reached a political impasse within his government, Netanyahu said from Likud headquarters in Tel Aviv that he would present an explicit plan next week spelling out his oft-repeated stance — that "Israel is ready to continue the peace process, contingent upon the principle of reciprocity."

Reflecting his growing impatience with counting heads in the Knesset to see if he had the necessary support, he added, "I will not run after anyone. We are standing, with deep, personal conviction, that we are going in the right way." □

Russian Jews confronting flurry of anti-Semitic incidents

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Politicians from across Russia's political spectrum are criticizing an anti-Semitic comment made by a prominent Communist member of the Russian Parliament.

Indeed, even members of the Communist Party slammed their fellow legislator, Viktor Ilyukhin, for blaming influential Jews in President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle for the "genocide" of ethnic Russians since the collapse of communism.

Ilyukhin made the comment at a session of a commission created by members of the Parliament who want to impeach Yeltsin.

The incident comes as Russian Jews report continuing occurrences of anti-Semitism. Among the recent developments:

- Some residents of the southern Russian city of Krasnodar recently found anti-Semitic leaflets in their mailboxes. According to news reports, the leaflets, calling for pogroms and the expulsion of Jews, also urged the region's notorious governor, Nikolai Kondratenko, to run for president of Russia.

- Some residents of the Siberian city of Novosibirsk recently found their mailboxes stuffed with anti-Semitic leaflets blaming Jews for Russia's economic hardships.

- Russian National Unity, the largest ultranationalist group in the country, said it would ignore Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's decision to ban a neo-Nazi gathering.

- Hundreds of stickers saying "Jews Are Rubbish" and showing a man throwing a Star of David into a trash can appeared in the northwestern Russian town of Borovichi.

These incidents, which came after the Russian Parliament refused to censure Communist lawmaker Albert Makashov for several public anti-Semitic remarks made early this fall and the recent assassination of liberal politician Galina Starovoitova, a longtime supporter of Jewish causes, have heightened concern among Russian Jewish leaders.

As a result, the governing board of the Russian Jewish Congress recently decided to lobby the international community to halt contacts with Russia's Communist Party because of its failure to censure Makashov.

Indeed, some 31 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to Yeltsin this week, urging him to step up his efforts to halt the spread of anti-Semitism.

"We urge you to do your utmost to show General Makashov and all Russians that your government does not condone such hateful behavior, nor will it tolerate the scapegoating of one ethnic population for the complex economic problems of an entire nation," the letter said, adding that charges should be brought against those inciting "hatred and violence."

Ilyukhin, chairman of the security committee in the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, has made several thinly veiled anti-Semitic comments in the past.

Last May, following the bombing of a Moscow synagogue, he said in an interview that such attacks on the Jewish community may occur again as a reaction to the fact that the priority for government appointments "is bestowed on one nationality: Jews."

Ilyukhin's remark went unnoticed, but he made sure Tuesday that his latest slur would not. Before television cameras covering

a hearing of the commission debating Yeltsin's impeachment, he said:

"The large-scale genocide would not have been possible if Yeltsin's inner circle and the country's previous governments consisted mainly of members of the indigenous peoples and not exclusively of people of Jewish nationality, though that nation is without a doubt talented, pragmatic and has done much to benefit the Soviet Union."

Communists have long held Yeltsin responsible for the decline in Russia's population, through a decreased birth rate and lower life expectancy, since the collapse of the Soviet Union — and "genocide" against Russians is one of the five charges the committee is considering.

Dmitry Yakushkin, a spokesman for President Yeltsin, reacted to Ilyukhin's statement by saying that Communists have again showed their true colors.

But First Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov, a member of the Communist Party, said through his spokesman that remarks criticizing officials on the basis of their ethnicity are "intolerable."

Boris Berezovsky, an influential Jewish business tycoon, who has led the calls to outlaw the party, said Makashov and Ilyukhin should be punished.

"Their place is in court and not in the Duma," Berezovsky said. He added that authorities should "resort to force" to fight anti-Semitism and make the existing legislation work.

Russia has a legal statute banning the incitement of ethnic strife, and Russia's Justice Minister Pavel Krashennikov said Ilyukhin's remarks may allow him to be prosecuted under this code. But attempts to punish Makashov under the same statute have yet to bear fruit.

Meanwhile, the leaflets that appeared in Krasnodar, which called for Jews to be expelled and their homes set on fire, appeared to demonstrate that grass-roots anti-Semitism is still thriving in Russia's provinces.

"Kikes will be annihilated and the victory will be ours," the unsigned leaflets said, adding that pogroms could help "our beloved leader" Kondratenko.

Kondratenko, the governor of the largely agricultural region of Krasnodar, has repeatedly made anti-Semitic, racist and anti-Western statements. The Krasnodar region is home to some 3,000 Jews — one-half of whom live in the city of Krasnodar.

Russia's Justice Ministry and the Prosecutor General's Office announced recently that they were considering the possibility of investigating Kondratenko's anti-Semitism and pressing criminal charges against him.

It is not clear if the leaflets had Kondratenko's backing.

Krasnodar Mayor Valery Samoilenko ordered an investigation into the incident. There are indications that the distribution of the pamphlets could be a reflection of an ongoing dispute between Kondratenko and Samoilenko, the mayor of the region's largest city, who has previously ordered an investigation to be launched against the governor. A day before the leaflets were distributed, an official newspaper in Krasnodar that supports Kondratenko warned against a "provocation" that was being prepared to harm the governor's reputation.

Yuri Teitelbaum, head of the Russian Jewish Congress' regional branch in Krasnodar, said in a telephone interview that the Jewish community remains relatively calm in the wake of the incident. □