



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 228

Monday, December 21, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

End of Iraqi strikes calms Israel

Israel lowered its preparations against a possible Iraqi attack after U.S. and British forces ended their air strikes against Baghdad. But Israeli officials say they see the halting of the strikes as a lull in the ongoing crisis with Iraq, not an end to it.

During the four days of Operation Desert Fox, Patriot anti-missile batteries were stationed outside major Israeli cities, but they have now been returned to army bases.

Cabinet votes to suspend Wye

Israel's Cabinet voted to suspend the Wye agreement until it feels the Palestinian Authority has lived up to its part of the accord.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought the vote to shore up right-wing support in advance of a crucial Knesset vote that could force early elections.

A bill sponsored by Israel's opposition Labor Party to call for early elections is likely to pass the Knesset on Monday, according to Israeli political observers.

Meanwhile, a group representing settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip called on right-wing legislators to oppose holding early elections. [Page 1]

Bomb rocks Cape Town shul

A bomb exploded outside a synagogue located in a Cape Town suburb hours after congregants held a Chanukah party there.

No one was hurt in the explosion, which shattered the synagogue's stained-glass doors and windows. [Page 2]

Jewish leader's grave bombed

A bomb planted in a Berlin cemetery shattered the grave of a former leader of Germany's Jewish community.

The desecration of the grave of Heinz Galinsky, who died in 1992, prompted German President Roman Herzog to send an open telegram to Galinsky's widow condemning the attack.

Moscovitz resigns from UJA post

Bernard Moscovitz resigned as executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal to accept an executive post at the American Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. [Page 4]

Cabinet backs premier, but new elections likely

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has gotten the Cabinet's backing for his stance on halting implementation of the Wye agreement.

But at the same time, the premier has signaled that the collapse of his government and the scheduling of early elections are inevitable.

During its weekly session Sunday, the Cabinet voted to suspend the Wye agreement until it feels the Palestinian Authority has lived up to its part of the accord.

Reaffirming the stance adopted by Netanyahu earlier this month, the Cabinet called on the Palestinian Authority to take the following steps before Israel would move forward on implementation of the Wye accord:

- cancel plans to declare an independent state unilaterally next May;
- acknowledge that the Wye accord does not call on Israel to release any Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands;
- stop inciting violence among the Palestinian people;
- confiscate illegal weapons; and
- reduce the Palestinian police force to the size specified in the Oslo accords.

In the weeks since Netanyahu announced these conditions, the Palestinian Authority has maintained that it already met its obligations under the Wye accord, adding that Israel is seeking excuses not to implement its part of the agreement.

The prime minister sought the Cabinet vote to shore up right-wing support in advance of a crucial Knesset vote that is expected to force early elections.

Netanyahu, who plans to present the Cabinet motion to the Knesset on Monday, has stated that he will call for new elections if the Parliament fails to back his stance on Wye.

Despite his last-ditch effort to hold the coalition together, the prime minister sounds as if early elections are inevitable.

Speaking on Channel 2 Television, Netanyahu dismissed questions about whether Parliament would be dissolved and new elections held.

"The real question is, what will the elections be about," he said.

A bill sponsored by Israel's opposition Labor Party to call for early elections is likely to pass the Knesset on Monday, according to Israeli political observers.

Because of the governing coalition's narrow Knesset majority of 61-59, far-right coalition members whose votes are expected to be a deciding factor in Monday's vote came under pressure from both ends of the political spectrum.

Meanwhile, a group representing settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip called on right-wing legislators to oppose holding early elections.

The Yesha Council, which has bitterly criticized the Israeli premier, said Netanyahu is still preferable to any other candidate who might win such an election.

If Netanyahu adheres to his demands on the Palestinian Authority, "the government can be allowed to continue to exist," settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein told Israel Radio. "There is no reason to drag the country into an embarrassing situation."

Much of the talk about early elections has focused on the possible formation of a new, centrist party and who would lead it.

Among the names put forward as possible candidates for the new party are former army chief of staff Amnon Shahak, former Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo and Likud Knesset member Dan Meridor.

An opinion poll indicated that Shahak would be Netanyahu's most formidable

MIDEAST FOCUS

Netanyahu accepts resignation

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accepted the resignation of Finance Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman and assumed the portfolio himself.

Ne'eman announced his decision to quit last week, saying divisions in Netanyahu's governing coalition over the Wye agreement were blocking passage of the 1999 budget by a Dec. 31 deadline.

Meanwhile, Israeli social welfare organizations called on legislators to oppose the planned budget for next year, saying it short-changed needy sectors of society.

Palestinians lift press ban

The Palestinian Authority lifted a ban on foreign news organizations that had attempted to cover Palestinian demonstrations in support of Iraq held in past days throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinian officials had imposed the ban in an effort to squelch reports about the demonstrations, a source of embarrassment to the self-rule government, which has sought improved ties with the United States.

Some 100 Palestinian demonstrators were wounded during clashes with Israeli troops over the weekend.

Army defuses bomb

The Israeli army said its forces defused a bomb found along the border of Israel and the Gaza Strip last Friday.

Army officials said the bomb contained 13 pounds of explosives and was set to detonate when an army patrol passed.

Haredim protest outside cafe

Fervently Orthodox Israelis demonstrated outside a Jerusalem cafe that operates on the Sabbath.

Police were called in to disperse the crowd when some of the protesters engaged in confrontations with customers and workers at the Aroma Cafe.

challenger if new elections were held. The former chief of staff's possible candidacy is raising concern in the Labor Party, which views him as someone who could split the vote with Labor's leader, Ehud Barak, and force a runoff between one of them and Netanyahu.

Under Israeli law, Shahak, currently on leave from the army, must wait 100 days from the time he retires from the army before entering politics.

A parliamentary committee was expected to discuss this week shortening the period army officers and government officials must wait before they can enter the political arena. □

Bombing of Cape Town shul outrages South African Jewry

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — South African Jews are outraged by the bombing of a synagogue in a suburb of Cape Town early last Friday, which some suspect of being perpetrated by Muslims protesting the U.S. bombardment of Iraq.

Nobody was hurt in the explosion, which occurred just after midnight, about two hours after congregants had left the synagogue following a Chanukah party Thursday evening.

But the blast shattered the ornate stained-glass doors and windows inside the synagogue, one of the oldest in Cape Town.

"Thank God, nobody was hurt and there was no damage to anything inside" the sanctuary, said Mickey Glass, executive director of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues in Cape Town.

The blast rocked the entire suburb of Wynberg.

The suburb, once a stronghold of Cape Town Jewry, is now occupied by a large number of Muslims.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Muslims and Jews lived side by side in the street where the shul is situated, and there were a number of Muslim shops nearby.

But after an act restricting where certain groups could live was strictly enforced, Muslims were restricted to an area in Wynberg that is less than a mile from the synagogue.

The Muslim community in Cape Town has a high percentage of fundamentalists and fringe groups that are supported by Iran and Libya.

No group claimed immediate responsibility for the bombing.

But it is thought to be the work of Muslim fundamentalists who were allegedly responsible for bombs placed in a Jewish home and bookstore in an adjacent suburb last year.

Fundamentalists also bombed the Planet Hollywood restaurant on the city's waterfront in August.

"It is probably in retaliation for the U.S. bombing of Baghdad," said Rabbi Rafi Wolff, the spiritual leader of the Wynberg Synagogue.

Wolff, who lives in a house next to the shul, said services at the synagogue would continue.

"This has only served to strengthen our resolve to intensify our activities. The entire community has been incredibly supportive, and, instead of staying away, we doubled our attendance at the morning minyan today," he said.

In New York, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America issued a statement saying it was "extremely troubled" by the incident, and it called on its member synagogues to take extra precautions to protect against such attacks.

The security already in place at the synagogue was being credited for the bomb being placed outside, and not inside, the building.

Seymour Kopelowitz, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the country's Jewish umbrella group, said the community was "shocked and outraged at the senseless and cowardly bombing."

He added, "Anti-Semitism of any sort has no place in South Africa today, and we demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice." □



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.

JEWISH WORLD

Report: Vichy members protected

Members of France's pro-Nazi Vichy regime who profited from the sale of looted Jewish assets were protected from prosecution after World War II, according to documents from the French Finance Ministry's archives.

The daily newspaper *Le Parisien*, which obtained the files, reported that some Vichy administrators received a 10 percent commission from the sale of buildings and businesses confiscated as part of an effort to rid the French economy of Jewish influence.

British bank reaches settlement

Bardays Bank reached a \$3.6 million settlement for the restitution of Holocaust survivors' assets.

The settlement calls for the British-based bank to pay claims of any Jewish customer who lost assets in branches it operated in France during World War II.

Litigation continues against other seven French banks.

Communist may be prosecuted

A Russian prosecutor said he is investigating whether a recent comment made by a Communist lawmaker that Jews in President Boris Yeltsin's inner circle are responsible for the "genocide" of ethnic Russians is a prosecutable offense.

The controversy over Viktor Ilyukhin's comment comes weeks after another Communist lawmaker, Gen. Albert Makashov, also made several public anti-Semitic remarks. The Russian Parliament has rejected motions to censure the lawmakers for their remarks.

Moscow mayor to sue extremist

The mayor of Moscow said he would file a lawsuit against the leader of Russia's largest ultranationalist group for threatening him.

Alexander Barkashov, leader of the ultranationalist Russian National Unity organization, said it was time "to have it out" with Yuri Luzhkov and "his Jewish gang" after Luzhkov banned a conference the group had planned to hold over the weekend. Luzhkov issued the ban on the grounds that it could threaten public order.

Leo Frank musical opens

A musical about a Jewish man who was killed by a Georgia lynch mob opened on Broadway. "Parade" tells the story of Leo Frank, who was convicted of the murder of a 14-year-old girl in a case that Frank's lawyers eventually brought before the Supreme Court. Frank received a life sentence in an atmosphere of rampant anti-Semitism, but was taken from his cell and hanged by an angry mob.

The play is directed by Harold Prince, whose past work includes "Cabaret" and "Sweeney Todd."

Swiss get Jewish president who is proud of her heritage

By Fredy Rom

BERN (JTA) — Switzerland will soon have a president who plans to speak out aggressively about her country's role in World War II.

Recently elected by the Swiss Parliament to assume the country's presidency on Jan. 1, Ruth Dreifuss said she is "especially proud as a woman and of course also as a member of the Jewish community" to take on the post.

Dreifuss, a member of the left-of-center Social Democrats, will at that time replace Flavio Cotti in the largely ceremonial post, which rotates on an annual basis among the Swiss Cabinet's seven members.

The first Jew — and the first woman — to become Swiss president, Dreifuss, 58, will inherit a country that is attempting to cope with an anti-Semitic backlash after Jewish groups mounted a campaign in recent years for Switzerland to acknowledge the financial ties that existed between its leading banks and Nazi Germany.

Accusations from the Jewish organizations that the banks not only worked hand in hand with the German central bank to launder Nazi-looted gold, but also refused to make restitution to Holocaust survivors for unpaid dormant accounts dating back to the war, stung Swiss sensibilities and continue to spark anti-Semitic incidents.

In an interview with JTA, Dreifuss made it clear that she would not back off from the controversy.

"My professional commitment is leftist, feminist and dedicated to human rights," said Dreifuss, a non-practicing Jew. But, she added, the issue of the country's wartime actions would also be on her political agenda.

Dreifuss, who has served as interior minister, a portfolio she will retain after assuming the presidency, noted that she kept a low profile on the issue in the past because she did not want to speak out as the "token Jew" in the government.

"But I am, and was always, proud of my Jewish roots," she said in the interview, adding that she will reopen dialogue with Jewish groups over Holocaust-era issues.

"Because of my roots, I am more sensitive than others in the government to the whole problem," which was sparked by the years of unremitting charges about the country's wartime actions.

Dreifuss was born in 1940 in an eastern Swiss canton, or state. As the Nazis approached the Swiss border, her family moved to Geneva.

During the war, her father, Sidney, played a role in helping Jewish refugees who sought haven in Switzerland. Dreifuss said in the interview that her father's actions played a role in shaping her determination to seek justice for Holocaust victims.

Sources in the Swiss government said Dreifuss has always maintained an excellent private relationship with the World Jewish Congress — the group that initiated the charges against the Swiss banks.

Her religion has never been an issue, even at those times when the government was reporting an increase in the anti-Semitic backlash to the WJC's and other groups' allegations.

Despite this, Swiss Jewish groups preferred to keep a low profile in their reaction to her being named to the presidency.

"Every Swiss Jew is proud" that she was elected, a senior member of the Swiss Jewish community said — but only on condition of anonymity.

Neither the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, the community's umbrella group, nor any other Swiss Jewish organization published a letter of congratulations to Dreifuss, fearing that such a move could provoke counter-statements from anti-Semites in the country.

Dreifuss raised some eyebrows when she was among the few Swiss politicians to welcome the decision in August by two leading Swiss banks to pay a \$1.25 billion settlement of Holocaust-era claims. Despite that settlement, she now insists that the country must continue to deal honestly with its past.

"It would be a catastrophe if this would mean we consider our work over," Dreifuss said. □

Top executive leaving UJA as search process continues

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — In the latest high-level personnel change to hit the Jewish fund-raising establishment, Bernard Moscovitz has resigned as executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal to accept an executive post at the American Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

"It's a tremendous institution that's growing tremendously," Moscovitz said in a telephone interview, calling the change "an incredible opportunity."

The move comes as a search committee is narrowing down a list of potential candidates for the chief executive post of the new entity to be formed through the merger of the UJA and the Council of Jewish Federations.

UJA President Richard Wexler, in a statement announcing Moscovitz's departure, praised him for "spearheading the organization's marketing and communications efforts."

Moscovitz, who has a background in advertising, was the UJA's first national director for marketing prior to being named as executive vice president in 1994. He will take over at the American fund-raising arm of Ben-Gurion on Jan. 19. In his stead, Lee Twersky, UJA's vice president of finance and administration, will "carry the baton" handed him by Moscovitz. But Twersky, who has been with the UJA for 14 years, says he is "just assuming the role" until a new executive officer is appointed for the merged entity.

UJA, which raises funds for overseas Jewish needs, and CJF, which represents Jewish federations in North America, entered a partnership in June with the United Israel Appeal, which funnels money raised by the federations and UJA to the Jewish Agency for Israel. That partnership, currently being called the UJA Federations of North America, will be formalized in a corporate merger sometime next year. UJA's integration into that "new entity" is now the subject of what insiders call "intense conversation."

Moscovitz is the second executive to leave the partnership since its formation.

Martin Kraar stepped down as the top professional at CJF in July to take over the helm of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science. Jay Yoskowitz, then CJF's chief operating officer, took over from Kraar as executive vice president.

Moscovitz's departure came as little surprise to those who had worked with him during his four years at UJA. He was not considered to be a candidate for the top executive post of the new merged entity.

The search committee, chaired by lay leaders Daniel Shapiro of New York and Richard Pearlstone of Aspen, Colo., has spent the past four months looking for a professional leader who is both willing and qualified to direct the mammoth entity, which will help manage the fund-raising campaigns and social service activities of some 200 Jewish communities.

Shapiro said the list of candidates includes "more than one and less than 10" names from both inside and outside the UJA-federation system.

Wexler said in a telephone interview that he expects the search to conclude by February, which was originally set as the goal for finalizing the merger.

That date has been pushed back to April 1999.

Meanwhile, legal and financial agreements, as well as a

mission statement, are being prepared currently in the national office, and will be dispersed to federations in North America for ratification.

The reasons for the extended time frame are several, but those engaged in the business of the merger insist it is not a sign of problems and that all partners are, in Wexler's words, "moving quickly in toward the ultimate creation of the new entity."

Wexler said the date was pushed back because during the month of November most of the partnership's lay and professional leaders were in Israel for a series of annual meetings, including the federations' General Assembly.

Jeffrey Solomon, a consultant to the partnership, said extra time is needed to give the federations, who must ratify the merger, an opportunity to study the guiding documents now being created.

Solomon, who is president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, has been "on loan" to the partnership for the past three months.

His colleague there, Liz Jaffe, who temporarily worked for the CJF as a consultant on the General Assembly, has been offered a position as CJF's director of program development.

Solomon discounted the idea that the foundation's growing influence at the partnership is an "advance guard" for either his or Bronfman's taking permanent roles with UJA Federations of North America in the near future.

"That's one and one adding up to three!" he joked.

Wexler would not say if Bronfman is in the running for the post-merger entity's top lay position.

"At this point in the nominating process," he said, "if men and women of the caliber of Charles Bronfman make themselves available, it will say great things" about the new entity. □

New center for reflection planned for Bergen-Belsen

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Plans are being finalized for a non-denominational sanctuary space to be built on the grounds of the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

The building, called the House of Quiet, will serve as a site where visitors to the camp memorial site can retreat for private reflection, according to Rolf Wernstedt, president of the state Parliament of Lower Saxony.

The planned center will augment an exhibition space built after World War II on the former concentration camp grounds. After it liberated the camp in March 1945, the British army destroyed the buildings on the site to reduce the spread of infectious diseases rampant among prisoners.

An estimated 100,000 prisoners died at Bergen-Belsen, including 50,000 Soviet prisoners of war. The remaining 50,000 people, including Jews and political prisoners, died from hunger and disease before and shortly after the camp was liberated by the British army.

There has been discussion since the mid-1990s of erecting a building in Bergen-Belsen for silent reflection and prayer, according to Wernstedt. He says local Christian and Jewish leaders support the idea.

Several artists have been asked to submit designs for the planned sanctuary space. Wernstedt expects the project to be finalized by early next year. □