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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel charged in technology deal

The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency reportedly believes that Israel illegally shared sensitive American laser technology with China, according to The Washington Times.

Citing a Pentagon intelligence report, the newspaper reported that U.S. contractors in Israel told the Defense Department's investigative unit they saw Chinese technicians working with an Israeli company involved in the Tactical High-Energy Laser Project. Israel has repeatedly rejected past charges that it illegally transferred American technology to the Chinese.

Shahak raising funds in U.S.

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is raising money in the United States for Israel's new, unnamed centrist party. Shahak's schedule included a fund-raising dinner in New Jersey, a meeting with American Jewish Congress donors and a policy briefing to the Council on Foreign Relations.

Shahak, who stepped aside from the party's top slot so that former Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai could become the centrists' candidate for prime minister, is scheduled to visit Montreal later this week before returning to Israel.

July 1 set for Swiss report

An international commission investigating dormant Swiss bank accounts from the Holocaust era is expected to release its report by July 1, according to its chairman. Paul Volcker added at a news conference Wednesday in Zurich that the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons would finish sifting through the bank's archives by the end of March.

Germany marks Holocaust Day

Germany marked its fourth annual Holocaust Memorial Day with ceremonies in Parliament and at former concentration camps across the country. Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder reminded Germans of their duty to remember the actions of the Third Reich, a comment aimed at those who have proclaimed their weariness with repeated reminders about the Holocaust.

During his speech before Parliament, Schroeder vowed fair and speedy compensation for slave laborers from the Nazi era. [Page 3]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

It's the campaign, stupid: U.S. strategists flock to Israel

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — "Israel can be better, stupid."

That's the overarching message Ehud Barak needs to carry if he wants to oust Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to James Carville, one of the top U.S. election strategists hired by the Labor Party candidate for prime minister.

Borrowing from the successful mantra he created for Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign for president, "It's the economy, stupid," Carville is hoping to lead another candidate into office. But if Barak is going to win the Israeli election, he is going to have to beat candidates who themselves are being advised by some of Carville's traditional allies in the Clinton camp — as well as a couple of rivals.

Nearly a dozen high-profile American campaign consultants are flocking to Israel in advance of the May 17 elections. Netanyahu, Barak and the new unnamed centrist party all have secured the services of some of America's top political strategists. Many small parties are also hiring American consultants.

The new rush for American political expertise comes on top of a renewed drive for American dollars by prime ministerial candidates looking to help fund their campaigns.

It's not that there is any shortage of Israeli political experts. Pundits and pollsters abound in the Jewish state.

So why are Israeli candidates shelling out hundreds of thousands of dollars for American advice? And what will a full-force, American-style campaign do to already-heated Israeli politics?

Netanyahu may have the answers.

He rode the campaign commercials of Arthur Finkelstein, one of the most sought-after Republican strategists in the United States, to victory in the 1996 election.

Finkelstein created the message that instilled fear in Israeli voters that Netanyahu's opponent, Shimon Peres, was soft on terrorism and would divide Jerusalem. Commercials with Peres and Arafat walking hand in hand followed by scenes from suicide bombings in Tel Aviv were credited with swaying the winning margin to Netanyahu.

And throughout his tenure as prime minister Netanyahu has relied on Finkelstein.

Although former premiers Menachem Begin and Peres both had U.S. advisers in the 1970s and 1980s, neither allowed their strategists to play a prominent role.

In 1996 Peres frustrated his American advisers, including pollsters Mark Penn and Doug Schoen, by ignoring their advice to attack back.

This time around, sources say, Penn and Schoen, who have worked for President Clinton, will be hired by the new centrist party, which is being headed by Yitzhak Mordechai. Barak has promised not to make the same mistakes as Peres. He has already used some of Carville's advice to counter Netanyahu's attacks with pithy one-liners of his own.

"Too many lies for too long," Barak charged last month, soon after the Knesset dissolved itself and called for new elections.

Netanyahu immediately fired back, raising an incident from years ago when Barak left the scene of a military training accident before the wounded were fully evacuated. A commission later cleared him of any wrongdoing.

The early sparring has led to concerns that Israel's already emotionally charged campaigns could turn even nastier.

"The increasing reliance on American spin doctors will bring some of the worst

MIDEAST FOCUS

Albright meets new crown prince

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright extended her brief Middle East visit to meet Jordan's new Crown Prince Abdullah. Albright, who was in Egypt and Saudi Arabia primarily to discuss U.S. policy to Iraq, praised the Palestinian Authority for "fulfilling some aspects of what they need to do" under the Wye accord.

Speaking in Cairo after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Albright called on both Israel and the Palestinians to fulfill the obligations spelled out in the accord. Albright will not be visiting Israel during her trip.

Knesset moves to annex land

The Knesset gave preliminary approval to a bill aimed at annexing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The 10-4 vote prompted Israeli lawmakers from across the political spectrum to blast their ultranationalist colleagues for holding the ballot when most Knesset members were absent. Angered by the vote, Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon decided to ban votes on all bills other than budgetary legislation before the Knesset dissolves next week.

Settlers hopeful about Arens

Settler leaders in Israel hope the appointment of Moshe Arens as defense minister will help launch a new settlement drive before the nation's May elections.

Their comments came after Arens was sworn in for the Cabinet post.

Soldiers wound Palestinian

Israeli soldiers critically wounded a Palestinian during clashes in eastern Jerusalem.

The dashes erupted when Palestinian protesters began throwing stones and bottles at the troops, who were overseeing the demolitions of what Israel says are illegally built homes in an Arab neighborhood.

aspects of American electoral politics to the Israeli scene," leaders of the American Jewish Congress wrote in a recent opinion piece.

"In the United States, we have seen the degrading effect on political discourse of excessive marketing and manipulation," wrote Jack Rosen, AJCongress president, and Phil Baum, the group's executive director.

"We can only hope that image and sound bites will not be called upon to replace substance, just when substance is most critically needed."

For their part, the consultants admit that they have both positive and negative influences on the Jewish state.

"The truth is, Israeli politics is already pretty ugly — and has been before any real American influence," said Steve Rabinowitz, another of Barak's American advisers.

"It's hard to imagine Finkelstein or Carville making Israeli politics uglier," Rabinowitz added. "It will be quicker and sharper."

"On the positive side, it's been a modernization of some election techniques in Israel," Rabinowitz said, citing sophisticated polling techniques as an example.

"The downside has been a opportunity for both sides to charge that candidates are puppets of American consultants."

On a recent episode of a popular Israeli television show, "Hartzufim," a political parody with clay puppets, both Netanyahu and Barak were fed debate lines through earpieces from off-stage American advisers.

At the end of the debate, both candidates hum "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"By hiring high-profile, top American consultants, they tend to become more of the campaign than the candidates and the message. The issues will now take a back seat," said Ed Miller, a former Republican consultant and current law school student who is advising Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, a Russian immigrant rights party headed by Natan Sharansky. The party is now vying in its second election.

Miller cited Netanyahu's attack on Barak for parroting Carville after the consultant's first visit to Israel last month. He also cited the recent break-ins at the offices of the Washington pollsters hired by Barak.

Twice in one week, burglars disabled security systems and took Labor Party files from the Capitol Hill office of Stanley Greenberg, a prominent Democratic pollster. In addition to Carville and Greenberg, Barak has completed the team with the services of Robert Shrum, a media strategist. Greenberg, who has refused to comment about the break-in, called the Israeli electorate "very sophisticated."

"I don't worry that they're going to be bamboozled by American techniques," he told the Connecticut Jewish Ledger.

Responding to concerns that Clinton is influencing the Israeli elections and policy through consultants close to him, Greenberg said, "I never consulted him. He doesn't consult me when he bombs Iraq and I don't consult him on who to work for."

Another prominent Democratic consultant, Mark Mellman, is working for Meimad, a moderate Orthodox movement.

Aware that they have become part of the campaign, many of the consultants have refused requests for on-the-record interviews.

So for now they will work behind the scenes — as do Israeli and American fundraisers seeking money from American Jews for the Israeli candidates.

Beginning in 1994, Israeli candidates were barred from accepting direct contributions from overseas. But many Americans continue to contribute through legal "friends-of" committees set up in the United States. Israeli campaign watchers believe that candidates this year will surpass the record \$6 million raised in the 1996 campaign.

In addition to their concern over American consultants, some American Jews warned against the "corrosive" effects American Jewish money has on Israeli democracy.

"There is something unpalatable and wrong about campaigns for office in Israel being fought out on American soil," Rosen and Baum of AJCongress wrote, referring to fund raising here. "As a matter of good sense and due regard for the Israeli electorate, American Jews ought to reject all" requests for campaign contributions.

But for now, at least, this warning is going unheeded.

Israeli polls open in less than five months. By then, Israelis will know if Barak was right when he hired his strategists and predicted "a better campaign." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Communist head swipes at Jews

The leader of Russia's Communist Party took a thinly veiled swipe at Jews and other minorities. Speaking in Paris to journalists, Gennady Zyuganov said people with "non-Russian-sounding last names" are undermining Russia's "distinctive character."

Meanwhile, two Russian hard-line lawmakers who created an uproar last year by blaming the country's problems on Jews announced they are leaving the Communist Party. Albert Makashov and Viktor Ilyukhin said they would campaign under the banner of the left-wing Movement in Support of the Army in parliamentary elections to be held in December. Their party is expected to vote along the same lines as the Communists on most issues.

Group calls for Duke's expulsion

The Republican National Committee should expel David Duke from the party, according to the American Jewish Congress.

The group said in a letter that expelling Duke, who is running to succeed Rep. Bob Livingston, would make clear the party's repudiation of the former Klansman.

Anti-racist campaign returns

A leading Nazi-hunting group will soon re-release a public service advertising campaign in the United States aimed at combating racism and anti-Semitism. The Simon Wiesenthal Center's campaign, which is scheduled to coincide with the annual commemoration of Black History Month in February, will run in trains and buses in more than 20 U.S. cities.

Zhirinovskiy claims harassment

German officials denied that Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was harassed at the Frankfurt airport over the weekend. The Russian ultranationalist had made the charges after he was detained briefly during a trip through Germany to a meeting in France. A spokeswoman said Zhirinovskiy, who is not allowed to visit Germany because of racist and anti-Semitic remarks he made on previous trips, was allowed to continue on to France after his passport was investigated by immigration officials.

German extremist sites double

The number of right-wing extremist Internet sites in Germany doubled in 1998, according to German officials.

Meanwhile, the steady climb in recent years of incidents of right-wing extremism in Germany was reversed in one eastern region of the country. The decline in incidents in the state of Brandenburg is being attributed to the creation of police troops to deal and vigorous opposition by numerous local groups.

German Holocaust memorial day marked with state ceremonies and controversies

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Four years after its introduction, Germany's national day to commemorate the Holocaust is sparking debates about history and memory.

The Jan. 27 commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day, which coincides with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops in 1945, was highlighted by a ceremony held in the Bundestag, the German parliament, in Bonn. Other remembrance ceremonies took place in state parliaments. Numerous local groups sponsored lectures and debates on Holocaust-related topics.

However, despite the emphasis on Holocaust education envisioned for the day, a survey by the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper of schools in the city of Frankfurt revealed that few schools had planned special events for the occasion.

The day came as the country is embroiled in ongoing public debates about confronting Holocaust memory and the necessity for a central Holocaust monument in Germany.

President Roman Herzog, who initiated the day of commemoration in 1996, spoke to the Bundestag on Wednesday and condemned all manifestations of anti-Semitism.

He said that although anti-Semitism occurs in other countries, acts such as the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Germany justifiably elicit more outrage. In December, the gravestone in Berlin of Heinz Galinski, a former head of the country's Jewish community, was blown up in a still-unsolved arson attack.

Herzog criticized a recent discussion about whether or not Holocaust victims are using their victimhood to get compensation.

The discussion, said Herzog, has to do "with right and justice."

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder backed a compensation fund for those who worked as slave laborers for German companies during the Nazi regime.

In a statement honoring the memorial day, Schroeder said the German government is working to solve this issue as quickly as possible.

Schroeder also spoke out against closing the books on Germany's confrontation with its past, a demand frequently put forth by conservative thinkers. "Every attempt to escape responsibility for our history is condemned to failure," he said.

In his Bundestag speech, Herzog lent support to Ignatz Bubis, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, calling him "a German patriot."

In recent months, Bubis and the well-known novelist Martin Walser have been embroiled in a debate about Holocaust memory. In a recent speech, Walser said Holocaust memory is often used against the German people as a "moral bludgeon." The novelist claims it is time to take Holocaust memory out of the public arena and put it on a more private level.

In Frankfurt on Wednesday evening, there was a march against Walser's views. The march began at the site where the novelist held his controversial speech and ended at the site of a memorial for Frankfurt's Jewish citizens who were murdered during the Nazi era.

In the debate about whether to build a central Holocaust monument in Germany, Herzog backed the monument concept. However, he said it is also important to have memorials throughout the country at sites that relate to the Holocaust, such as Gestapo torture chambers, buildings used for the deportation of Jews and schools where Jewish students were dismissed.

Jewish leader Ignatz Bubis has backed a new design for the monument by U.S. architect Peter Eisenmann that incorporates a library, research center and exhibition space.

Elsewhere in Germany, Bavarian Governor Edmund Stoiber handed over to the Jewish community a list with the names of 11,000 Jewish males who were imprisoned in Dachau. The list, used as evidence during the Nuremberg trials after World War II, was recently rediscovered in the National Archives in Washington.

And former World War II Resistance fighters issued an appeal to German youth to fight against racism and xenophobia. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israelis react with caution to Jordan's decision on new heir

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are reacting cautiously to Jordanian King Hussein's decision to name a new successor.

Hussein's eldest son Abdullah — who now replaces the King's brother, Crown Prince Hassan, as heir to the Hashemite throne — is largely an unknown entity, particularly with regard to Israeli-Jordanian relations.

The change of succession took on particular significance Tuesday, when Hussein flew back to the United States for treatment after developing what his doctor said is a recurrence of cancer.

Hussein left after a brief airport ceremony at which Abdullah was sworn in as regent in the king's absence.

Commenting on Abdullah's sudden ascent, Reserve Col. Shalom Harari, a former adviser on Arab affairs at the Israeli Defense Ministry, said the 36-year-old Abdullah has little knowledge of political or economic issues.

Harari was not alone in his assessment. Abdullah, a career soldier who leads Jordan's elite Special Forces, was described this week by close associates as having little ambition outside the military. This lack of political experience has Israeli officials closely watching the Jordanian court, Harari added, pointing out that when one of the pillars of Jordanian stability is changed, there may be cause for concern.

A more optimistic view emerged from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman, David Bar-Illan.

While wishing the ailing king "health and longevity," Bar-Illan said in an interview with JTA that when the day comes for Abdullah to assume the reins of power, "We are sure that he will adopt the same policy of his father of bringing peace and security to the region's peoples."

Many Israeli sources refrained from commenting on the situation in Amman — particularly after warnings were sounded in Jordan against Israeli interference in Jordan's internal affairs.

But speaking off the record, several sources said they were not concerned by the royal reshuffling and that Abdullah would continue his father's policies.

Coming just days after the 63-year-old Hussein returned home from six months of cancer treatment in the United States, the decision to replace Hassan as his heir was a political stunner.

Indeed, Middle East expert Ehud Ya'ari described the move as little short of a "monarchical coup d'etat."

The decision was conveyed in a royal decree issued Monday in which the king "agreed to relieve Prince Hassan of the position he has held for the past 34 years."

Hussein has long been seen as Israel's closest ally in the Arab world — a view confirmed after Israel and Jordan signed their historic peace treaty in October 1994.

Hussein was crowned king at the age of 17 in May 1953. He subsequently carried on the pro-Western policies of his grandfather, King Abdullah, who was assassinated in 1951 after trying to make peace with Israel.

The demographic makeup of Jordan changed after the 1967 Six-Day War, when the kingdom was flooded with Palestinian

refugees. Some 3 million of Jordan's current population of 4.4 million are Palestinians.

Abdullah, 37, is the son of Hussein's second wife, Queen Mona. Married to a Palestinian woman, Abdullah is seen by some sources in Jerusalem as better positioned to maintain a good relationship with Jordan's Palestinian majority.

But some in the Jewish world were saddened by the decision to bypass Hassan, who for decades was designated Hussein's successor. While lacking the charisma of the king, Hassan, 52, is a familiar figure among Jewish audiences, who viewed him as likely to carry on his brother's policies toward Israel.

Hassan has many friends in the Jewish state, Shimon Shamir, Israel's former ambassador to Jordan, said this week.

"Hassan had built through the years an extensive network of contacts with Israeli economists, politicians and intellectuals," he said. "They have learned to appreciate his personality and are certainly sorry to see a decrease in his status."

For years, the king and his brother had worked closely, with nothing in their behavior betraying any strains. When Hussein left for the United States six months ago, he entrusted Hassan with control over Jordan's affairs.

But according to reports in Jerusalem, problems developed when Hassan behaved as if Hussein were not coming back.

Shortly after Hussein left for the United States, Hassan spoke publicly of the need to eradicate corruption. Jordanians loyal to the king wondered whether the comment was meant to imply that Hussein had condoned corruption.

In a sign that relations between the two were cooling, Hassan did not visit his brother's bedside during the months Hussein spent at the Minnesota-based Mayo Clinic. In addition, Hussein had expressed concern that as king, Hassan would pass on the line of succession to his own sons, not the king's.

With his own mortality evidently in mind, Hussein moved quickly to dispel growing speculation about the line of succession.

Queen Noor had wanted her eldest son, Hamza, 19, to be appointed crown prince. Hamza was the only of Hussein's five sons to be at the monarch's bedside during the past six months.

But analysts say Hussein ultimately decided that Jordan is facing too many problems to allow the throne to pass to a young, inexperienced leader.

"One of the main issues on the national agenda is the Hashemite concern about a Palestinian state," said Ya'ari. "Hussein is well aware of the fact that once a Palestinian state becomes a political reality, it will have a major effect on Jordan."

"Only a solid grip on the armed forces, ensuring their continued loyalty, will prevent turning the country into a de facto Palestinian state."

With his senior position in the Jordanian army, the mainstay of support for the Jordanian monarchy, Abdullah is believed capable of ensuring a smooth transition of power.

This is the second time that Abdullah was named crown prince. The previous time he was only 3 years old.

But Hussein, who was at the time ruling over a shaky monarchy and was the target of several assassination attempts, wanted an older successor if, like his grandfather, he were to be murdered.

"Abdullah is certainly fit for the job, no less than his father," said Nasseradin Nashashibi of Jerusalem, a close associate of the royal family, "He is sharp, intelligent — and just as flamboyant as his father." □