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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Eizenstat reassures Israel on aid

Aid to Israel and the Palestinian Authority promised during last October's Wye peace talks must move forward as one package, a senior State Department official said. Responding to Israeli concerns that the United States was preparing to deliver money to the Palestinians but not to Israel, the U.S. undersecretary of state for economics, Stuart Eizenstat, said the aid packages are "locked at the hip." [Page 4]

UJA board backs merger

The United Jewish Appeal held its final board meeting in its current form last week after 60 years of fund raising for overseas Jewish needs. The 74-member board unanimously approved plans for a formal merger with the Council of Jewish Federations.

That move is scheduled to be finalized in April, pending ratification by local federations. The move will also need the approval of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the United Israel Appeal at meetings this month.

Vandals attack Siberian shul

Vandals went on a rampage at a synagogue in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The entire synagogue and its contents, except for the Torah scrolls, were damaged in the attack. The incident took place amid a recent increase in Russian anti-Semitism, sparked in part by the nation's ongoing economic troubles.

Protest held in Sheinbein case

The mother of a Maryland teen-ager called on the United States to recall its ambassador to Israel until the suspected murderer of her son is extradited to the United States to stand trial.

Others at a protest outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington called on the United States to end aid to the Jewish state until Samuel Sheinbein is returned.

L.A. residents sue German firm

Five Los Angeles residents filed a lawsuit against a major German architectural and construction firm demanding compensation for years of unpaid slave labor during World War II. The suit against Philipp Holzmann AG is the first of its kind brought before a California court. [Page 3]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Israeli Arab seated on high court, 17 years after idea is first floated

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — For the past 20 years, Abdel Rahman Zuabi served as a judge with the Nazareth District Court.

He never hid his disappointment that he was not appointed president of that court, yet he often dreamed of getting a higher appointment — to Israel's Supreme Court.

That day came last week, when for the first time since the establishment of the Jewish state, an Israeli Arab took a seat on the nation's highest court.

The appointment of Zuabi, 66, is quite dramatic, given the often fragile relations between the Jewish and Arab sectors of Israeli society.

But the move does not necessarily indicate that Israel's Arab minority is being integrated into mainstream Israeli society, according to at least one member of the panel responsible for Zuabi's appointment. Zuabi's rise to the Supreme Court only highlights the lack of more Arab appointments to Israeli courts or in the broader civil service, says Amnon Rubinstein, a minister in the former Labor government and a former dean of the Tel Aviv University School of Law.

The sensitivity surrounding the appointment is underscored by the fact that the idea was first publicly entertained, but never acted upon, 17 years ago.

Indeed, at that time, Zuabi himself was mentioned as a possible candidate.

But it was a politically charged idea. More recently, David Libai, the justice minister in the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who suggested Zuabi for the high court, failed to carry through on the proposal.

One of Israel's leading jurists, Yusuf Haj Yihya, quit at the time as a judge in the Tel Aviv District Court, protesting that "an Arab will never be appointed to the Supreme Court."

Zuabi was born in the village of Sulam near the northern city of Afula. He was the first Arab graduate of the Tel Aviv School of Law and Economics, which was later incorporated into Tel Aviv University. One of his classmates at the time was the flamboyant army chief of staff, Moshe Dayan.

Contrary to most Arab public figures, Zuabi does not hide the fact that he is a secular Muslim. Although he does not pray regularly and has never made the traditional pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, he does fast during the month of Ramadan and refrains from drinking alcohol.

During his years with the Nazareth District Court, Zuabi earned the reputation of being particularly hard on criminals involved in drug use and trafficking. He once sentenced a drug dealer to 20 years in jail — the heaviest sentence ever handed down in Israel for a drug offense.

Zuabi first shot to national prominence when the then-Supreme Court president, Meir Shamgar, appointed Zuabi to serve on the state commission probing the 1994 Hebron massacre, in which Jewish settler Dr. Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians during prayers at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs.

Ironically, Zuabi's first appearances on the Supreme Court last week coincided with the fifth anniversary of the Hebron slayings on the Jewish calendar.

When forming the panel five years ago, Shamgar needed an Arab jurist on the commission for political reasons.

And Zuabi was just the right person: a respected and experienced Arab jurist — and someone who had always emphasized that he was a proud citizen of the State of

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli judges get protection

Three Israeli judges received added security protection before issuing a ruling in the bribery and fraud trial of the political leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

Some supporters of Aryeh Deri have threatened to riot in the streets if he is convicted. In a case dating back to 1993, Deri is charged with committing financial misconduct and breach of public trust while serving as a former interior minister.

High court freezes legislation

Israel's Supreme Court temporarily froze legislation passed last month legalizing a pirate radio station run by Jewish settlers.

The judges, ruling on a petition submitted by left-wing legislators, called on the government to verify the legality of the procedure under which the Knesset gave Arutz-7 permission to broadcast after the station operated illegally for 10 years.

Bail posted for Chasidic man

Israel's deputy housing minister, Meir Porush, joined two leading Chasidic rabbis in putting up \$1.5 million bail for the release of a fervently Orthodox Jew wanted in the United States to face fraud charges.

Chaim Berger, 73, was released from custody and put under house arrest after the bail was posted. He was indicted in 1997 for allegedly defrauding U.S. federal and state grant programs out of millions of dollars.

Ships turned away at Israeli ports

Cargo ships began turning away from Israeli ports as a dock workers' strike entered its ninth day. More than 60 ships were backed up at Israel's ports as a result of the strike. The head of Israel's manufacturers association urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to intervene in the labor dispute, saying \$500 million worth of cargo is waiting to be unloaded.



Daily News Bulletin

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Israel. Zuabi had another qualification: He was a member of Israel's largest Arab clan.

Numbering some 15,000 people, the Zuabis had several clan members who rose to prominence in Israeli society. After the 1967 Six-Day War, Zuabi's brother-in-law, the late Abdel Aziz Zuabi, became the first Arab to serve as deputy health minister. It was the highest rank to be reached by an Israeli Arab.

When Abdel Rahman Zuabi was appointed to the Shamgar Commission, it was generally assumed that he would keep a low profile.

Observers said Zuabi, already eager for a seat on the Supreme Court, would be unlikely to anger Shamgar, whose approval was needed for the appointment.

But Zuabi surprised everyone.

The criminal law expert who had long been the nemesis of drug dealers became the panel's toughest questioner of the Hebron-area settlers and of several senior army officers, who found it difficult to explain how Goldstein had managed to enter the Muslim prayer hall and carry out the killings.

"Zuabi dared say things that had never been said before in the Supreme Court," said Avigdor Feldman, one of Israel's top lawyers. "He stressed the absence of the rule of law by posing excellent and thorny questions."

Indeed, some of Zuabi's questions were so thorny that he drew Shamgar's ire. In one instance, when Zuabi asked witnesses whether it was true that settlers believe that Arab property is free for the taking, Shamgar interrupted and tried to balance the picture by asking how many times Arabs had thrown stones at settlers that month.

But Zuabi stood his ground. "When I sit on the commission," he explained at the time, "I forget that I am an Arab, and I am only trying to find out the truth."

Hebron's settlers did not like him from the beginning of the commission's proceedings, particularly after a newspaper article quoted him as saying that the "brutal party in the territories are the settlers."

Although Zuabi promptly denied the quote, an appeal was introduced before the high court seeking Zuabi's removal from the commission.

Among those supporting the appeal, then-Likud Knesset member Tzachi Hanegbi said at the time that Zuabi's reported comments proved "he cannot fulfill his utmost duty as a judge." The appeal was later rejected.

By a stroke of irony, it was Hanegbi, who now serves as justice minister, who last year formally approved Zuabi's appointment to the Supreme Court.

Word of his appointment prompted no protests. □

Soldiers arrested in Britain for alleged links to neo-Nazis

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Two British soldiers from elite regiments were among 14 people arrested in Britain's largest postwar swoop on suspected neo-Nazis involved in acts of criminal racism.

In addition to the weekend arrests, simultaneous police raids on dozens of private addresses throughout Britain produced large quantities of weapons, live ammunition, far-right literature and compact disks containing explicitly racist material.

The soldiers are believed to have used their military expertise to provide weapons training for neo-Nazis in Britain and terrorists who operate in Northern Ireland.

The raids were the result of a yearlong undercover operation in which military and police intelligence agents infiltrated the neo-Nazi Combat 18 movement.

Combat 18 takes its name from the first and eighth letters of the alphabet — Adolf Hitler's initials — and is regarded as a dangerously violent extremist organization with links to international terrorism.

Investigators are reported to have identified an additional 10 soldiers with Combat 18 ties, but decided not to act against them because they lack sufficient evidence to prosecute them.

Former Combat 18 leader Charlie Sargeant, serving a life sentence for murder, once said it would be a mistake to think his organization has a mass following. "We are what we are," he said. "We're thugs who follow an ideology." □

JEWISH WORLD

Menorah planned for Vatican

A menorah to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust will be permanently installed in the Vatican during a ceremony next month. A delegation of American rabbis is scheduled to participate in the ceremony, which will launch a series of projects aimed at furthering Jewish-Catholic understanding.

Far-right Austrian party wins

A far-right Austrian party won 42 percent of the vote in an election in the nation's southern province of Carinthia.

But because the xenophobic Freedom Party won less than a majority, it remained unclear whether its leader, Jorg Haider, would get enough support from other parties to become provincial governor.

Haider was voted out of that office in 1991 after he praised Hitler's "decent employment policies."

Jewish leaders seek suspect

Two Jewish leaders on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum joined forces to urge the United States to convince the Palestinian Authority to hand over a Palestinian suspected of involvement in a 1995 Jerusalem bus bombing that killed Joan Davenny, a teacher at a Jewish school in Connecticut.

Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein and Leonard Fein, a member of the board of Americans for Peace Now, made the request in a letter to the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Martin Indyk.

Latvian Jews threaten boycott

Latvian Jewish leaders are threatening to boycott a national holiday dedicated to soldiers who died in World War II because it will be focused on commemorating soldiers who fought for the Nazi cause.

Grigory Krupnikov, the leader of the Latvian Jewish community, said that as part of the boycott of the first annual Latvian Soldiers Remembrance Day, scheduled for March 16, Jewish officials will refuse to obey a law under which they must hang the nation's flag outside Jewish community facilities.

Veterans of the Latvian SS, a Nazi-sponsored unit, have traditionally marked March 16 as the day their unit first fought against the Soviet Red Army in 1943.

Shabbat Across America planned

Some 75,000 North American Jews are expected to participate in the third annual Shabbat Across America this Friday night.

The event is sponsored by the National Jewish Outreach Program in an effort to get Jews with little or no religious background to appreciate the significance of the Sabbath.

Ex-slave workers in Los Angeles file suit against German company

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Five Los Angeles residents have filed a lawsuit against a major German firm demanding compensation for years of unpaid slave labor during World War II.

The suit against Philipp Holzmann AG, one of Europe's largest architectural and construction companies, is the first of its kind brought before a California court.

The suit is one of several class-action lawsuits that have been filed recently on behalf of former slave laborers against large German companies, including Volkswagen, BMW and Siemens.

Also accused in some suits are General Motors and Ford, whose German subsidiaries allegedly aided the Nazi war effort.

German governmental and business officials are currently negotiating with world Jewish groups to reach agreement on a compensation fund aimed at resolving such class-action suits.

The lawsuit was announced at a news conference convened by two California state legislators, Sen. Tom Hayden and Assemblyman Wally Knox.

The two Los Angeles Democrats said they will introduce a bill that would give former slave laborers legal standing in California courts to sue their wartime "employers" and extend the statute of limitations for filing such claims to December 2010.

The five survivors were forced to work "14-hour shifts, seven days a week, under inhuman conditions" while building a fortress-like factory producing the first experimental jet fighter-bombers for the Nazi air force, the suit charges.

One of the plaintiffs is Si Frumkin, a long-time Soviet Jewry activist, who, like the others, was herded into the ghetto of Kovno, Lithuania, and then sent to a Dachau sub-camp for forced labor.

Both Frumkin, then 13, and his father worked long shifts carrying cement bags and metal rods to help build the factory.

Weakened by the inhuman working and living conditions, the elder Frumkin died 20 days before the camp's liberation.

Holzmann "owes me. They owe my father," Frumkin told the Los Angeles Times.

The suit charges that Holzmann, which conducts extensive business in California and other parts of the United States, violated the state's business and professional code by refusing to pay the forced laborers and "intentionally inflicting emotional distress."

"We must remember that Holzmann and other corporations took these slave laborers voluntarily — nobody forced them to do it — and treated them like replaceable waste products," said Lisa Stern, one of the attorneys representing the survivors. □

Spy named as Righteous Gentile

LONDON (JTA) — The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem has given the title of "Righteous Among Nations" to a wartime British spy who helped save at least 10,000 Jews.

The call to recognize Frank Foley posthumously was made by Britain's Holocaust Educational Trust after the publication of "Foley: the Spy Who Saved 10,000 Jews," a book about his exploits, which included hiding in his home Jews hunted by the Gestapo, helping people find false passports and even visiting concentration camps to rescue other Nazi victims.

Foley, a senior British intelligence officer in Germany in the years leading up to World War II, was head of the British Passport Office in Berlin.

Foley did not have diplomatic immunity and could have been arrested at any time for his activity, much of which was conducted without authorization from his superiors back home.

A Yad Vashem official said Foley's efforts had been known for years, but he could not be officially recognized because the museum had no eyewitness accounts of his actions. □

Eizenstat: Added aid to Israel, the Palestinians 'locked at hip'

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. aid to Israel and the Palestinian Authority promised during last October's Wye peace talks is intrinsically linked and must move forward as one package, according to a senior State Department official.

Responding to Israeli concerns that the United States was preparing to deliver money to the Palestinians but not to the Israelis, Stuart Eizenstat, the U.S. undersecretary of state for economics, said Monday that the aid packages are "locked at the hip."

Speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Eizenstat called a recent report in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz "grossly inaccurate" and "literally 180 degrees off."

The newspaper reported that during meetings in Israel last week, Eizenstat told the Israelis that the United States would delay \$1.2 billion promised over three years to Israel, while the Palestinians would begin to receive \$400 million promised over three years.

The paper said the distinction was being made because the Palestinians had carried out their obligations under the Wye peace agreement, while the Israelis had not.

The Wye agreement stipulated further Israeli redeployments from the West Bank according to a specific timetable that coincided with specific Palestinian steps to crack down on terrorism.

In the wake of the Ha'aretz report, Israeli officials accused the United States of meddling in Israel's election campaign by implying that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's peace policies were costing the Jewish state \$1.2 billion in aid.

Seeking to knock down the report, Eizenstat said, "We consider the Palestinian and Israeli package to be part of one pledge that will move together."

When pressed whether the aid would be delivered together or simply passed by Congress together, Eizenstat said, "As a practical matter, just like the Israeli and Palestinian economics are locked at the hip, so too is this aid package."

The aid, however, remains contingent on the implementation of the Wye agreement, other U.S. officials said.

"We believe there will be implementation on both sides and aid will go forward under these circumstances," Eizenstat said.

The latest flare-up is the second time that Israel and the United States have locked horns over this specific aid package, which goes beyond the normal foreign aid package.

After initial concerns that U.S. aid would go to beef up security for West Bank settlements, the Clinton and Netanyahu administrations carefully negotiated a detailed plan to spend the money on the direct costs of Israel's promised redeployments in the West Bank. The debate came as a Senate committee last week agreed to provide an immediate \$100 million to Jordan, also promised at the Wye talks.

Under the plan, Jordan would receive a total of \$300 million over three years.

Eizenstat said he sought to reassure Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens that the Jordan portion of the supplemental aid package was expedited because of economic urgencies in the wake of King Hussein's death.

Meanwhile, the request for Israeli and Palestinian aid is bogged down in Congress over disagreement about how to pay for the aid, which is in addition to the almost \$3 billion annual foreign aid package to Israel and the \$100 million for the Palestinians.

Under budget rules agreed to by Congress and the White House, all new spending must be offset by cuts in other programs or by tax increases.

Congressional and administration officials are currently working on a plan to identify potential cuts that would not involve tax increases, congressional and administration officials said.

Late last week, 76 members of the House of Representatives and 50 senators sent letters to President Clinton supporting the Wye aid package in spite of the difficulty finding the resources to pay for it.

"Although we understand the constraints on the budget, we believe fulfilling our commitments made at Wye must be among our highest priorities," the House members wrote.

Expressing similar sentiments, the senators wrote, "The Wye aid package should be provided as promised, with both parties fulfilling their commitments made at Wye."

In the meantime, the State Department is continuing to work with the Israelis and Palestinians to put the peace process back on track.

"It's difficult for the economic side of the process to get in front of the political side," Eizenstat said. □

Building project in Montreal boosts city's Jewish community

By Bram Eisenthal

MONTREAL (JTA) — For the next eight months or so, employees of Montreal's major Jewish communal organizations won't have to go far to buy kosher meat — or blue jeans.

In the midst of an almost \$20 million expansion of facilities and services, the organized Jewish community recently moved into a shopping mall located in the predominantly Jewish suburb of Cote St. Luc.

The renovation, which will place many of Canada's Jewish community organizations under a central address, is being hailed by Jewish leaders as a huge vote of confidence in the Jewish future in Montreal.

The Jewish population of Montreal has diminished in recent years in part because of what many in the community perceive as the anti-Semitism in the French secessionist movement in Quebec.

The majority of funding for the renovations on Cummings House, which houses Federation CJA and its constituent agencies, came from private donations.

In addition, the federal, provincial and municipal governments have contributed about \$800,000 apiece to help finance the renovations. It is not unusual for the Canadian government to participate in such projects.

Meanwhile, mall vendors are excited about the prospect of increased sales at the mall.

"I'm hoping business will go up by about 50 percent," said Tony Habre, manager of the A.L. Van Houtte restaurant in the Mall.

Two of the mall's partners, Roy Salomon and Harvey Wolfe, are leaders in Canada's Jewish community. □