



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 94

Thursday, May 20, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Demjanjuk's deportation sought

The U.S. Justice Department launched a second attempt to strip alleged Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk of his U.S. citizenship. The department's Nazi-hunting unit, the Office of Special Investigations, filed a new complaint Wednesday accusing Demjanjuk of serving as a guard at the Sobibor extermination camp and at the Majdanek and Flossenburg concentration camps.

Demjanjuk, a 79-year-old retired Cleveland auto worker, was convicted in Israel of being the infamous Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible." He spent five years on death row before the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the ruling in 1993. [Page 3]

### Begin resigns from Knesset

Hawkish Israeli legislator Ze'ev "Benny" Begin announced Wednesday he is resigning from politics. Begin, who withdrew from the race for prime minister one day before Israelis went to the polls this week, said he had decided on the move because his National Unity Party won only three Knesset seats in Monday's vote.

"I am a public servant with no public," Begin said. "Because of the limited benefit I see in my continued service, I concluded it is better that I cease my activities in public life." [Page 4]

### Reports: Barak may include Likud

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak is more inclined to bring the Likud Party than the fervently Orthodox Shas Party into his governing coalition, according to Israeli media reports.

The Israeli daily Ma'ariv quoted Barak as saying that he had no interest in negotiating with Shas if its leader, Aryeh Deri, continued to pull political strings from behind the scenes.

Deri announced Wednesday he is resigning from the Knesset, but added that he would continue to head the party's "spiritual and social" activities.

### Bomb found at Jewish theater

An unexploded bomb was found Tuesday at the Shalom Jewish Theater in Moscow. The device contained more than one pound of explosives and a timing mechanism, according to police, who added that had it gone off it could have caused massive damage.

## THE VIEW FROM AMERICA

### Religious pluralism advocates expect more support from Barak

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For those American Jews who want to see the peace process move forward and who oppose Orthodox control over religious affairs in Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu was not their man.

But will incoming Prime Minister Ehud Barak become the champion of their convictions?

Barak, 57, left the military four years ago and, in the mold of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has positioned himself as a dovish security hawk.

But where does the most decorated soldier in Israel's history stand on issues of religion and state?

"He has been absolutely consistent. It took him some time to reach a decision — but once he did he was absolutely immovable" in his opposition to "any legislation that divides the Jewish people," said Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of Association of Reform Zionists of America/World Union for Progressive Judaism, North America.

In a 1997 interview during the height of the controversy over conversion legislation — a move to codify Israel's ban on the recognition of non-Orthodox conversions — Barak told JTA, "It's not politics when it comes to dealing with the very unity of the Jewish people.

"I will never support — and the Labor Party will never support — any legislation that threatens to divide the Jewish people," he said.

It's a message he has stuck with, say advocates of religious pluralism, who have high hopes for their cause now that Barak will be leading Israel.

The Reform and Conservative movements have spent the last three years playing defense in the Knesset while waging battles in the Israeli courts to win official recognition of conversions performed by their rabbis and government funding for their institutions. They now expect an entirely different dynamic in Israel on what has come to be known as the pluralism controversy.

But now that Barak has been elected prime minister, will he stick with his promises made as leader of the opposition or will he move to accommodate the haredim, or fervently Orthodox, in his quest to unify the Jewish people?

The answer will be determined by how dependent Barak becomes on the Orthodox and fervently Orthodox parties that made significant gains in this week's elections to the Knesset.

Some religious pluralism advocates believe that the last Labor-led governments, under Rabin and then Shimon Peres, sacrificed those issues in order to gain support for their peace policies from the Orthodox parties.

But proponents of religious pluralism believe Barak will be different. They point to Barak's agreement with the modern Orthodox movement Meimad, which joined his One Israel list.

Labor and Meimad reached an agreement that would significantly transform the role of religion in Israel.

Based on a document hammered out earlier this year, dubbed the "New Covenant on Religion and State," the agreement calls for public transportation on Shabbat, as determined by the local authorities; the establishment of a framework for civil marriages in Israel, something which does not currently exist; and the transferring of jurisdiction

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Sharon named acting Likud head

The leadership of Israel's Likud Party recommended Wednesday that Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon serve as acting party chairman in place of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who resigned the post after losing Monday's election. The nomination of Sharon, a veteran hawk, will be voted on at a meeting of the party's Central Committee on May 27.

### Arafat congratulates Barak

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat congratulated Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak on his election victory during a telephone call Tuesday.

The two spoke of their commitment to the peace process and the need to get it back on track, an Arafat aide said after the call.

In a separate call to President Clinton, Arafat appealed to the United States to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

### Khatami lashes out at Israel

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami lashed out at Israel during a historic five-day trip to Saudi Arabia, the first by an Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Khatami reportedly said during a speech at King Abdul Aziz University that Israel is threatening security in the Persian Gulf. The "oppression of the Zionist regime is the most important cause of insecurity in the Gulf and the Islamic world," he was quoted as saying by the Reuters news service.

### Israeli film targets Orthodox

The first Israeli film to be chosen for competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 25 years was shot in Jerusalem's fervently Orthodox enclave, Mea Shearim.

"Kadosh" attacks the Orthodox community and its treatment of women. The film's director, Amos Gitai, said he made the film to force Israelis to "decide what kind of country we will be."



## Daily News Bulletin

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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](http://www.jta.org).  
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of the religious courts from the Interior Ministry to the Ministry of Justice.

At the same time, it bars all business and commercial transactions on Shabbat with the exception of cultural, sport and leisure activities.

Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, said he expects Barak to follow the covenant as he seeks to reduce secular-religious tensions.

But at the same time, Schorsch predicted, Barak will tread carefully because "this government is not going to turn against the Orthodox."

During his campaign this year, Barak reiterated his opposition to any legislation that would delegitimize Reform and Conservative Jews, including the controversial conversion bill.

"We will block it, we will not let it pass, we will raise our hands against it, period," he told American Jewish activists in Israel earlier this year.

In January, he voted against Knesset legislation that would prevent non-Orthodox Jews from serving on local religious councils.

But Barak has stayed away from some other critical Knesset votes on the issue in recent years, including one in which Israel's parliament last May overwhelmingly rejected legislation calling for the separation of religion and state.

He also skipped a rally in Jerusalem in February in support of the Israeli Supreme Court.

The rally was held to counter a 250,000-strong Orthodox prayer demonstration called to protest what the organizers termed the "anti-religious" rulings of the high court.

Once Barak is in power — he must form a government within 45 days — the non-Orthodox are expecting dramatic changes in the way Israel approaches the religious pluralism issue.

Still, much will depend on whether Barak decides to bring Shas, the fervently Orthodox party that garnered a projected 17 seats in this week's voting, into his coalition government.

Many observers believe that even if the new premier does bring Shas into the government, he will not have to depend on the party for his political survival the way Netanyahu did.

Hirsch said he anticipates that there will be "some kind of empathetic, sympathetic treatment from government."

But some Orthodox Jews in America are not so quick to dismiss the influence of the religious parties in Israel.

Rabbi Avi Shafran, director of public relations for Agudath Israel of America, said, "We'll see when push comes to shove" if Barak sticks to his campaign promises.

"We're hoping he will be, as he put it, 'everybody's prime minister,'" said Shafran, who also serves as the American director of Am Echad, a group dedicated to maintaining Orthodox control over religious matters in Israel in the interest of Jewish unity.

Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union, is one of many Orthodox activists hoping that Barak will include some religious parties in his coalition.

"It's not going to be what it was, but we should not say automatically the Orthodox community has lost its political punch," he said.

Ganchrow expressed concern about the success of the new anti-religious party, Shinui, and of Meretz, which together garnered 15 Knesset seats.

Reflecting on that development, Ganchrow said, "We shouldn't just attack the results. We should ask ourselves privately, 'Why people feel such antagonism toward the haredi?'"

"You have to say, 'Is there something we can do as a community to reduce this antagonism,'" Ganchrow said.

Hirsch, meanwhile, said that the Reform movement would continue to press its case in the Israeli courts, where we "expect results which will not be overturned or ignored."

This strategy by the Reform movement could strain relations with the Conservative movement, which intends to take a different approach.

"The judicial arena is an area of last resort, when the political arena has been blocked," said the Conservative movement's Schorsch. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Kosovar refugees to arrive in U.S.

The first group of refugees from Kosovo to be resettled by American Jewish groups is scheduled to arrive Thursday in the United States.

More than 30 refugees who will stay in the New York area are to be assisted by the New York Association for New Americans. About 32 people are expected to be resettled in Los Angeles, and five will go to New Jersey.

### Pro-Israel resolution sponsored

Some 60 members of the U.S. Congress sponsored a resolution commending Israel on its commitment to democracy and expressing congressional support for the peace process.

The House of Representatives could vote as early as this week on the measure, according to Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.), the lead sponsor of the nonbinding resolution.

### War crimes verdict expected

A verdict is expected Thursday in what is believed to be one of Germany's last war crimes trials.

Alfons Goetzfried, 79, is charged with helping murder 17,000 people, most of them Jews, on Nov. 3, 1943, at the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland.

He reportedly has admitted to shooting 500 people himself in that action, called by the Nazis the "Harvest Festival." If he is found guilty, he may not have to serve any more time beyond the 13 years he has already served in Soviet prisons and labor camps.

### Estonian SS leader to be honored

Estonian officials plan to rebury the remains of the person who headed a Nazi-sponsored military unit in the Baltic nation's national cemetery alongside some of the country's most revered figures.

Commander of the Estonian 20th SS Division, Alfons Rebane is regarded by many Estonians as a leading fighter against the Soviet Union's wartime occupation of the country.

### Groups plan to fight bank accord

Jewish groups plan to fight an accord reached by a unit of Bank Austria and several class-action lawyers, who allege the bank profited from the looted assets of Holocaust victims. The accord's \$40 million settlement is too small, the Jewish groups said Tuesday.

### Shoah meetings planned in Japan

A private Japanese group plans to hold a series of conferences aimed at educating children about the Nazi Holocaust.

The Holocaust Education Center plans to hold the summer conferences in four Japanese cities, including Kyoto and Tokyo.

## U.S. tries again to strip alleged Nazi camp guard of his citizenship

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Justice Department has launched a second attempt to strip alleged Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk of his U.S. citizenship.

The department's Nazi-hunting unit, the Office of Special Investigations, filed a complaint in U.S. District Court in Cleveland on Wednesday alleging that the 79-year-old retired Cleveland autoworker was a guard at the Sobibor extermination camp and at the Majdanek and Flossenburg concentration camps.

The complaint also alleges that Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian native, served in the Nazi SS-run Trawniki unit that participated in a campaign to annihilate European Jews.

The Justice Department dropped its previous claim that Demjanjuk was the notorious Nazi guard named "Ivan the Terrible" who operated a gas chamber at the Treblinka extermination camp in Nazi-occupied Poland for 1942 to 1943.

The Justice Department made that charge in 1977 after several Treblinka survivors identified Demjanjuk as the guard from a photo, and the former Soviet Union provided from its war archives a Nazi identification card from the Trawniki camp, where Nazi death camp guards were recruited and trained.

Based on that evidence, Demjanjuk was stripped of his citizenship in 1981 and extradited to Israel in 1986 to stand trial for crimes against humanity.

Following well-publicized and lengthy legal proceedings, a court in the Jewish state convicted the Ukrainian native of being Ivan the Terrible and sentenced him to death in 1988.

He spent five years on death row before the Israeli Supreme Court determined in 1993 that there was reasonable doubt that Demjanjuk was the Treblinka guard in light of evidence from the Soviet Union that suggested another man could have been Ivan the Terrible.

Although the court found that Demjanjuk had been a guard at Sobibor, Majdanek, Flossenburg and Trawniki, it released him because he had been extradited to stand trial on the Ivan the Terrible charges.

Since proceedings began against him nearly 20 years ago, Demjanjuk has maintained that he did not serve as a guard at any concentration or death camp.

Demjanjuk has said he was a farmer in Poland and then a Soviet Red Army soldier who spent most of the war in a German prisoner-of-war camp — a contention that both the Israeli Supreme Court and a U.S. federal judge concluded is false.

Following the Israeli Supreme Court's reversal, the Office of Special Investigations was criticized by a U.S. appellate court for "reckless" withholding of evidence that Demjanjuk could have used to fight extradition.

Last year, the U.S. District Court in Cleveland threw out the original denaturalization order and reinstated Demjanjuk's U.S. citizenship.

But it said the government could reinstate denaturalization proceedings if the evidence warranted it.

Eli Rosenbaum, director of OSI, said the new complaint alleges that Demjanjuk served as an armed guard at Sobibor, where more than 200,000 men, women and children were murdered; at Majdanek, a death and labor camp, where between 200,000 and 360,000 died or were murdered; and at Flossenburg, where thousands were incarcerated as slave laborers and 30,000 prisoners died.

The government also charges that Demjanjuk began working for the Nazis in 1942 at the Trawniki training and base camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, where he participated in Operation Reinhard, a Nazi program that rounded up 1.7 million Jews and murdered them by mass shootings or in death camps with poison gas.

Jewish groups commended the Justice Department's move and expressed hope that Demjanjuk's citizenship will finally and permanently be revoked.

"Living in this country is a privilege he does not deserve, and his continued presence here is an insult to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust," said Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a survivor of the Holocaust. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**Abdullah comes to U.S. talking of peace, asking for debt relief**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Jordan's King Abdullah stepped out from his father's shadow on his first visit here since assuming the throne of the Hashemite Kingdom in early February.

Sounding much like King Hussein, and wearing a beard that reminded many of his late father, Abdullah staked out familiar territory by pledging support for the peace process and promising to do all he can to help the Palestinians and Israelis reach a peace agreement.

But Abdullah, who has repaired relations with many Arab states strained by Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, carried messages from Syria.

Israel and Syria are "at the threshold of a breakthrough," Abdullah told a delegation of some 18 Jewish officials at a meeting Monday at the Blair House in Washington.

Abdullah told the officials that Syrian President Hafez Assad referred in a recent meeting to "when" Syria has peace with Israel, not "if," according to participants.

Abdullah's visit to Washington came in the middle of a tour of European states where the king is seeking billions of dollars in debt forgiveness. His meeting with President Clinton came the morning after Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak defeated Benjamin Netanyahu.

Abdullah said he has high hopes for the peace process in the wake of Barak's victory.

"We see eye to eye on many issues and we're very optimistic of taking the peace process forward," Abdullah told reporters in the Oval Office before meeting Tuesday with Clinton.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday, Abdullah cautioned against the "great expectations" that came with Barak's victory.

"We must be vigilant in supporting our friends, because if you have this increase of expectations and nothing happens, four or five months down the line, frustration could have an even worse backlash," he said.

Borrowing some of the language of his father, Abdullah said, "I hope that everybody will really rally behind our friends in Israel and the Palestinians, and assist them in achieving their noble aims and finally getting peace and stability and the type of world that we want to bring our children up in."

The king paid tribute to his father, who as an avid motorcycle rider formed an unusually close relationship with the Washington Metropolitan Police, which escorts visiting dignitaries.

After meeting with Clinton, Abdullah borrowed a Harley-Davidson motorcycle and rode with the police from his hotel in downtown Washington to Maryland in a tribute to the late king.

During his visit, Abdullah also met with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, congressional leaders and American businessmen. But it was Israel's election and the peace process that was the dominant topic during his stay. Abdullah, who met with Barak last month, spoke warmly of the prime minister-elect.

"I think that there's a trust and confidence between the both of us. And I am very excited that I think he is the type of man to take Israel into a new phase of peace and stability in our region."

Referring to Barak's background as Israel's most decorated

soldier, Abdullah said, "Soldiers tend to be able to break barriers between each other very, very quickly."

While the Israeli election and peace process dominated Abdullah's public appearances, Jordan's struggling economy was the focus of his visit.

Clinton expressed support for Abdullah's request that Japan and several European countries forgive billions of dollars in Jordanian debt. Congress is poised to pass a measure that includes an additional \$100 million in U.S. aid to Jordan. Three years ago the United States forgave millions in Jordanian debt and increased annual U.S. foreign aid to Jordan to \$250 million.

"We are also very much committed to Jordan's economic renewal," Clinton said before meeting with Abdullah.

Clinton promised to help Abdullah convince other countries to forgive some of Jordan's outstanding debts.

"Other nations could help more," Clinton said. "I would like to see more action on that."

Even with increased aid and debt forgiveness, the growth of Jordan's economy comes down to the success of the peace process, Abdullah said.

"The lack of movement on the economic front between" Israel and Jordan "was a direct result of a stagnation in the peace process."

"If we could move things ahead, I think that the whole area will bloom," he said. □

**Begin resigns from Knesset after 11 years as lawmaker**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Hawkish Israeli legislator Ze'ev "Benny" Begin has announced he is resigning from politics.

Begin, who withdrew from the race for prime minister one day before Israelis went to the polls this week, said Wednesday he had decided on the move because his National Unity Party won only three Knesset seats in Monday's vote.

"I am a public servant with no public," Begin said. "Because of the limited benefit I see in my continued service, I concluded it is better that I cease my activities in public life."

Begin, son of the late Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin, is a geologist by training who has served in the Knesset since 1988.

He was science minister in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu until he resigned the post in January 1997 to protest the Hebron Agreement, under which Israel turned over most of the West Bank town to Palestinian control.

As leader of the National Unity Party, a coalition of right-wing legislators opposed to the Oslo accords, he would have been able to assume one of the three Knesset seats the party won in Monday's vote.

Despite his hawkish views, Begin was uniformly admired by fellow legislators for his directness and integrity.

Yossi Sarid, leader of the left-wing Meretz Party, said Wednesday he was deeply saddened by Begin's decision and called on him to retract it. Labor Party Knesset member Dalia Itzik said Begin was a symbol of integrity and his departure would be a blow to public life.

Likud Knesset member Reuven Rivlin said the resignation symbolized the demise of Israel's nationalist camp. □