



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Debate rages over U.N. parley

A U.N. conference in Geneva that will address Israeli settlement activity was expected to go ahead as planned Thursday, although it was likely to be slightly scaled back.

Arab and European representatives were still discussing the details of the meeting hours before it was scheduled to take place. [Page 3]

U.S. condemns Moscow attack

The knifing of a Jewish leader in a Moscow synagogue was a "cowardly act of terrorism," the U.S. State Department said Wednesday.

Jewish groups in Russia and the United States said Tuesday's attack provides the latest proof that the Russian government must do more to crack down on anti-Semitism.

Meanwhile, the assailant, 20-year-old Nikita Krivchun, said, "My slogan is to fight the evil which is Judaism." [Page 4]

Bush opposes embassy move

Texas Gov. George W. Bush refused to support moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, according to the president of the Zionist Organization of America.

"I'm worried it will screw up the peace process," Bush said, according to Morton Klein, who had a brief conversation with the Republican presidential candidate at a fund-raiser Tuesday in Newark.

On Wednesday, one of Bush's pollsters released, along with a Democratic counterpart, a survey for the Israel Policy Forum which reported that 52 percent of American Jews support a recent decision by President Clinton to postpone moving the embassy.

Subcommittee OKs aid to Israel

A House of Representatives subcommittee unanimously approved a \$12.8 billion foreign aid bill for fiscal year 2000 that includes \$960 million in economic assistance and \$1.9 billion in military assistance for Israel.

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) defeated an attempt by the subcommittee chairman to take away "early disbursement" procedures for Israel, under which the Jewish state receives its economic aid in a lump sum at the beginning of the fiscal year. The full Appropriations Committee plans to vote on the measure next week.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

After years of frustration, Kwara Jews are euphoric

By Avi Machlis

MEVASSERET ZION, Israel (JTA) — Contentedly sitting on his cot at the absorption center, Manjur Adema exhibits little of the frustration he felt over the past seven years as he desperately waited to leave the remote Kwara region of Ethiopia and reunite with his extended family in Israel.

Like many of the more than 500 Jews who have arrived here in recent weeks from Kwara, which lies on Ethiopia's border with Sudan, the 62-year-old Adema is euphoric.

The uplifting experience has been punctuated by an emotional reunion with nephews and cousins who arrived in 1992. The family is now trying to make up for lost time.

"I have been longing to see my family again, and now I am very happy," says Adema, a shy smile peeking out from behind his grey goatee. "After seven years, my dream has been fulfilled."

But although their dreams have become reality, most of the new arrivals have not yet started thinking of the enormous challenge ahead — absorption into Israeli society.

And even the excitement cannot mask the nightmare endured by Adema, his family and the estimated 3,800 Kwara Jews who had been stranded in Ethiopia since 1991.

The Jews from the lower Kwara region were left off official rosters of Ethiopian Jews approved for aliyah, or immigration to Israel, in the mass airlifts of Operation Solomon in 1991.

The following year, some 2,500 Kwara Jews did manage to emigrate, but many others got caught in limbo as Israeli officials tried to determine which Ethiopians to approve for immigration.

Complicating the issue was the existence of some 14,000 Falash Mura — converts to Christianity who claim Jewish heritage, but whose Jewishness is questioned by the Israeli government.

As the chapter of the Kwara Jews draws to a close, the situation of the Falash Mura — many of whom already have families in Israel — remains a dilemma for the Israeli authorities.

Moved by their plight of the Kwara Jews once it became known in the last year, advocates from the United States and Israel cried out for Israel to expedite their immigration.

After months of unfulfilled promises, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the appeals by accelerating the aliyah.

One of those who arrived in 1992 was Adema's nephew, 49-year-old Tasama Malade.

Now a "veteran" Israeli, he is more open than some of the soft-spoken immigrants in his criticism of the Israeli authorities.

"I have spent several painful years crying and worrying about them, and I am very angry at the government and the Jewish Agency," Malade says as he visits his long-lost family.

Thinking there was hope for his family after the 1992 immigration of some Kwara Jews, Adema sent his son — one of six children — on the hazardous 200-mile trek to the northern city of Gondar, where many Kwara Jews had gathered at a compound near the Israeli Consulate to await immigration.

"Do not come now," was the message he relayed back to the family in Kwara when

MIDEAST FOCUS

Clinton upbeat about Barak visit

President Clinton is "eager as a kid with a new toy" to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Clinton also told Democratic fund-raisers Tuesday in Miami, "I hope that we can begin to energize the peace process on terms that are just and fair."

Clinton and Barak were slated to meet Thursday at the White House and then spend time at the presidential retreat at Camp David.

Iran, Israel spar over riots

Israel should not become involved in the student riots taking place in Iran, Foreign Minister David Levy told the Knesset on Tuesday. His comments came after Iranian officials said Israeli and U.S. comments on the riots were an interference in Iran's domestic affairs.

Turkish leader visits Israel

Israel's developing relations with Arab countries will not jeopardize the importance of its ties with Ankara, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said during a meeting Tuesday in Jerusalem with Turkish President Suleiman Demirel.

Turkey, which has long-standing disputes with Syria, has closely followed the recent overtures between Barak and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Likud blasts appointment of Arab

Israel's Likud Party filed a no-confidence motion in Prime Minister Ehud Barak's government over its appointment of Arab legislator Hashem Mahmeed, of the United Arab List, to the Knesset's security-sensitive Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Orthodox women open meeting

More than 1,000 Orthodox women launched Israel's first conference on the status of women in their community on Tuesday. Participants are discussing issues ranging from the role of women in synagogues to the difficulties in obtaining religious divorces.



Daily News Bulletin

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he realized Israel had discontinued the immigration effort. "When the way to Israel opens again, I will tell you to come."

Adema's son was stranded in Gondar, working day jobs and living in poverty.

Six months ago, he messaged his family to come. The farmer's family packed all its belongings on to donkeys and began a four-day journey under a blazing sun through some of Ethiopia's most isolated areas. They completed the journey to Gondar after a daylong ride on the back of a truck.

When they arrived, the Adema family found that the waiting period would not be easy.

The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was operating a relief center for thousands of Falash Mura who are still awaiting an Israeli decision on whether they are eligible to immigrate.

But if they entered the Falash Mura camp to seek assistance, the Adema family risked compromising their status as Jews in the eyes of Israel.

Micha Odenheimer, a contributing editor of the Jerusalem Report magazine whose reports on the Kwara Jews last year first exposed the community's plight, says many Kwara Jews in Gondar confronted the same situation.

"Most of the Kwara Jews who arrived in Gondar did not want to go to the Falash Mura compound, since they understood that if they were identified as Falash Mura they would not be allowed to come to Israel," says Odenheimer, who recently returned from a follow-up trip to Ethiopia.

"There was an ironic situation in which the Jews stayed out even though the NACOEJ would have been glad to help them."

The Alehi family found a similar situation when they arrived in Gondar.

Akno Alehi, 23, is the eldest of seven orphaned siblings. A few months ago, Watye Samali, their 75-year-old grandmother who now lives in Israel, sent money to help them make the trip to Gondar.

In Gondar, they rented a decrepit apartment near the office of the Jewish Agency for Israel and waited eight months. They were provided medical care — apparently from the JDC — but had to fend for all other needs by themselves.

"Somebody was helping the Falash Mura," says Alehi, unaware of the difference between the Jewish organizations in the field. "But nobody helped us."

Those who arrived in Gondar were eventually bused to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, for flights to Israel. And now, those who have arrived in Israel, hope their period of helplessness is over.

Tziki Aud, a Jewish Agency worker who is setting up the various absorption sites, says the Kwara immigrants may have a smoother absorption than earlier groups.

He hopes that within about a year, the new immigrants will be ready to leave the absorption center at Mevasseret Zion. Past groups of Ethiopian immigrants took between two to six years to leave.

"They are arriving much more prepared," says Aud, who has worked in previous absorption efforts for Ethiopian immigrants. "Many have already been given clothing and medical attention in Addis Ababa, and they have many relatives already in Israel to help them settle in. I call this absorption deluxe."

During the first week in Israel, each immigrant is given a bank account and identity card and registered for health care.

A family of four is given heavily subsidized housing — about \$100 a month for a four-room apartment — and \$5,000 for living expenses for the year. This week they began Hebrew classes.

The flights carrying immigrants are still arriving — twice a week now that Ethiopian Airlines has added a second weekday Tel Aviv flight to its schedule.

"Everything is working according to plan," says Michael Jankelovitz, a Jewish Agency spokesman. "The plan was to bring them all over during 40 weeks with one flight a week. With the new flight, this may all be over by September."

"The priority now is saving Jewish lives," says Jankelovitz, noting that the war between Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea is intensifying and creating an urgent need to bring the Jews to Israel quickly. "This should not become a war of who is doing the most among Jewish organizations," he says. "The wrong that was done to the Jews of Kwara is now being corrected." □

JEWISH WORLD

No more Iran sanctions planned

U.S. officials are not sure what additional steps they can take against Tehran if any harm comes to the 13 Iranian Jews arrested earlier this year on charges of spying for Israel.

U.S. sanctions against Iran are already so "draconian" that "it's not clear to me there are additional steps that could be taken," State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters Tuesday.

U.S. law currently bans all aid to Iran except for humanitarian medical and food assistance.

Illinois sues supremacist group

The state of Illinois sued the white supremacist group to which racially motivated killer Benjamin Nathaniel Smith belonged.

The state, which named the World Church of the Creator and its leader, Matthew Hale, wants the judge to decide whether the group is a charity.

If it is designated a charity, the state will then move to stop the group's activities until it accounts for all of its funds.

Group calls for force in Iraq

The American Jewish Congress called on President Clinton to increase its funding of groups working to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

In light of the successful use of force against the Serbs, "We must confront the fact that some measure of military involvement" may be the "only way to remove the lethal danger Saddam represents," said AJCongress President Jack Rosen.

Russian synagogue recognized

Local officials in the central Russian city of Bryansk registered a Reform synagogue there, ending a 20-month controversy over the congregation's official status.

In November 1997, two months after Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a controversial law that placed restrictions on religions that cannot prove they have existed officially in Russia for at least 15 years, provincial officials cited the legislation when denying registration to the liberal Jewish congregation in Bryansk, a city about 200 miles southwest of Moscow.

Man named Righteous Gentile

A man who helped save several Jews in the Soviet Union during World War II was given the title of Righteous Among the Nations at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Monday's ceremony honored Piotr Biliewicz, who risked his life by hiding Jews after the Nazis exterminated their ghettos in 1942. "Piotr was my angel, my savior," said Slava Cymer Finkel, one of the Jews saved by Biliewicz.

Geneva conference set to open as diplomatic efforts fail to halt it

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Amid a flurry of diplomatic activity on both sides of the Atlantic, the United Nations was set to open a conference in Geneva on Thursday to criticize Israeli settlement activity.

Organized at the request of the U.N. General Assembly, the signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs the treatment of civilians during wartime, planned to meet to discuss Israel's management of "occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

The conference is the first meeting of the parties to the convention for any reason since the treaty was adopted in 1949 as a measure to protect civilians from the kinds of force, intimidation and transfer of populations that characterized Nazi aggression. The session comes as Ehud Barak meets with President Clinton for the first time as prime minister to discuss ways to move the peace process forward.

Although Israel and the United States repeatedly criticized the meeting as a manipulation of humanitarian law aimed at forcing Israel's hand on settlements, the Palestinians refused to budge on their insistence that the meeting take place. Despite pressure to cancel the conference, by late Wednesday the session was still on.

Israel, the United States, Australia and Canada were boycotting the meeting. But what kind of meeting it would be remained subject to negotiations even at the 11th hour, as Palestinian, Arab and European officials went into all-night talks in Geneva.

The Palestinians, while agreeing to an abbreviated session without prolonged debate over the issue, were refusing a European Union demand to adjourn without setting a specific date for returning.

In Geneva, David Harris, the executive director of the American Jewish Committee, met with 15 ambassadors, seeking their opposition to the conference.

"Realistically, we were in the business of damage control," Harris said in a telephone interview from Geneva on Wednesday. "It was unrealistic from the start to believe the General Assembly resolution, which passed overwhelmingly, would be repudiated by the same majority who voted for it."

Harris, whose meetings included two with Arab ambassadors whom he refused to identify, tailored what he termed "realistic" messages to the individual ambassadors, depending on the positions of the country, he said. At a minimum, Harris said he asked the ambassadors to send a low-level representative and to support an adjournment with no set date for reconvening.

In Washington, AJCommittee President Bruce Ramer laid out a plan for reversing what he called the "unfair treatment" of Israel at the United Nations, which includes a call on U.S. diplomats to intensify their efforts against any discriminatory measure.

"It is essential that the U.S. diplomatic machinery, from the highest levels to the lowest, be directed to continue and intensify its vigorous efforts to resist and seek to alter discriminatory measures against Israel in the U.N.," Ramer said in testimony at a House International Relations Committee hearing Wednesday on Israel's treatment at the United Nations.

David Welch, assistant secretary of state for international organizations, said the United States opposed the Geneva conference on "legal and policy grounds."

Ronald Lauder, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, criticized U.N. member-states for acting "as though there had never been an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement."

The states "continue to allow the flow of anti-Israel resolutions in the General Assembly," Lauder testified.

At the congressional hearing, which recounted dozens of instances of U.N. attacks on Israel, U.S. officials further criticized the General Assembly for scheduling its opening session this year on Sept. 20, which is also Yom Kippur.

Welch told the House panel that Clinton would not address the General Assembly on its opening day, which is customary, and will instead speak on Sept. 21 "in recognition of the sanctity of Yom Kippur." □

Moscow synagogue attacker lashes out against Jewish 'evil'

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The young man who stabbed a prominent Moscow Jewish leader on Tuesday said he wanted to combat what he calls the "evil" of Judaism.

Nikita Krivchun, a 20-year-old Moscow student, denies that he is a member of a neo-Nazi group and insists that he did not receive any help in planning his attack, which culminated in the attack on Leopold Kaimovsky in the Choral Synagogue.

Kaimovsky, the 52-year-old business manager of Moscow's Jewish Arts Center, was wounded in the face, stomach and leg.

On Wednesday, he was in critical condition at a Moscow hospital.

The knifing is the latest proof that the Russian government must do more to crack down on anti-Semitism, the Russian Jewish Congress said.

"Today, knives are being used, tomorrow smoke will be seen rising from the crematoria," the group said in a letter to government officials.

The letter came as an unidentified individual on Wednesday called the Choral Synagogue to say that a Russian neo-Nazi leader had ordered his organization to set up "actions" near several Moscow synagogues Thursday night.

Russia's chief rabbi, Adolph Shayeveich, told JTA that the caller said the order came from Alexander Barkashov, leader of Russian National Unity, Russia's largest neo-Nazi group.

Krivchun, who is being held by police, said he had randomly selected Kaimovsky to be his victim.

"My slogan is to fight the evil which is Judaism," Krivchun said in the interview with a television station.

A spokesman for the Moscow police said Krivchun most likely will be charged with intentionally inflicting a serious injury. Under this charge, he may face up to 10 years in prison.

But Jewish leaders are insisting that the assailant be charged with attempted murder on religious and racial grounds, a more serious crime under Russian law.

The Moscow Prosecutor's Office said Wednesday that it is supervising the investigation, but while Russian Jewish leaders and most major media outlets have strongly reacted to the crime, most Russian and Moscow authorities have not yet commented on the incident.

The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexy II, expressed his indignation over the incident to the Russian Jewish community. □

Russian aliyah heads toward highest since '92, agency says

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The immigration of Russian Jews to Israel is reaching its highest levels since the mass exodus of the late 1980s and early 1990s, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel.

"If the trend continues, the number of Russian Jews [making aliyah] might reach 30,000" this year, which would be the highest

total since 1992, Jewish Agency Chairman Sallai Meridor said Wednesday.

Immigration from Russia is being fueled by the country's economic crisis and fears of rising anti-Semitism, agency officials said. During the first six months of 1999, 12,188 Russian Jews came to Israel, a 128 percent increase over the same period last year.

Russian Jewish emigres represented nearly half of the 25,516 Jews who made aliyah from across the former Soviet Union during this time. In previous years, Jewish emigres from Russia accounted for only some 30 percent of the total number of olim from the former Soviet Union.

A total of 60,000 emigres from the former Soviet states are expected to make aliyah during 1999. Last year the total was 46,000.

Some 800,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have made aliyah since 1989, when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev approved more liberal emigration policies. □

Austria to begin atoning at site of concentration camp

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Austria will begin to exorcize its ghosts when the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra moves from its comfortable, gilded home for a concert in the very heart of darkness: the site of the Mauthausen concentration camp.

From the time it plays the opening notes to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony next May, the country will begin to face up to what Chancellor Viktor Klima describes as "this dark chapter in our history."

The concert, to be conducted by the distinguished British conductor Sir Simon Rattle, will be held May 5, 2000, at the quarry of what was Mauthausen. The event will mark the anniversary of the liberation of the camp where some 100,000 Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals perished.

However, the choice of Beethoven's Ninth — much admired during the Third Reich as a piece of Teutonic triumphalism — is being criticized as demonstrating a lack of sensitivity to deep historic wounds. But others overlook the musical selection and are simply relieved that Austria is at last confronting its past.

The Austrian government was moved to initiate the concert by the forced expulsions and murders in Kosovo, just a few hundred miles down the Danube River, and by domestic support for a far-right nationalist party in Austria.

The concert is intended as much to sensitize the young to the dangers of racism as it is a tribute to the victims of the Holocaust.

"We no longer want to sweep this dark chapter of our history under the carpet," said Klima, who has designated May 5 as an annual Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism.

Some have asked why the 157-year-old Vienna Philharmonic, the pride and joy of Austria's cultural set, should have to bear the burden of leading this act of repentance when the orchestra did nothing except play music during the war.

Supporters of the concert say that is precisely the point.

Members of the orchestra did nothing when their fellow Jewish members were expelled in 1938, and they did nothing when six were sent to the camps and executed. □