



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 148

Monday, August 9, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Hillary's tree has Jewish branch

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has Jews on her family tree, according to a spokesman for her Senate exploratory committee. Howard Wolfson said Clinton "has very fond childhood memories" of Max Rosenberg, a Russian-born Jew who was the second husband of her grandmother.

According to reports, Clinton's maternal grandmother, Della, married Rosenberg in 1933, seven years after she and Clinton's grandfather, Edwin Howell, divorced. A petition for Max to adopt Della's children, including Clinton's mother, Dorothy, failed.

Barak sets out timetable

Israel will begin implementing the Wye accord next month, Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Sunday. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat later accepted the timetable, but added that there had already been too many delays.

Meanwhile, Israeli newspapers reported that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright may delay her trip to the Middle East until after Barak and Arafat iron out their differences regarding implementation of Wye's land-for-security timetable.

Neo-Nazi rally fizzles

A neo-Nazi rally planned for Saturday near the White House fizzled out when organizers canceled the event and only a handful of the white supremacists showed up. But a counter-rally organized by Jewish groups and a coalition of human-rights activists went on as planned. Washington police officials said they had spent some \$1 million to provide security for the neo-Nazis and were considering suing the American Nationalist Party to recover costs.

White House to honor Bronfman

World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom this week along with former presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and seven other prominent Americans.

The planned honor for Bronfman, who in 1996 spearheaded an international campaign charging that Swiss banks had profited from their financial dealings with the Nazis while refusing the postwar claims of Holocaust survivors, prompted the Swiss daily newspaper *Blick* to run a front-page headline on Saturday, "Clinton Insults Switzerland."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Asylum seekers sit in Israeli prison, with no nation willing to claim them

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Ahmad left Baghdad more than six years ago, he says he expected freedom from an oppressive Iraqi regime. Instead, he found imprisonment for more than five years in an Israeli jail.

Zuheir says that when he left Tehran more than four years ago, all he wanted was to escape from Iran's morality police. He, too, awaits an unknown fate in an Israeli prison.

But why Ahmad and Zuheir — whose names have been changed for this article — are in Israel and what their intentions are remain unknown.

Are they really political refugees seeking shelter from Iraq's Saddam Hussein or from the Revolutionary Guards in Tehran? Or are they spies who were unfortunate enough to be caught? These questions are part of a legal controversy that now lies before Israel's High Court of Justice.

Six Iraqis, three Syrians and two Iranians have recently appealed to Israel's highest legal authority, demanding that they be freed from jail until a country agrees to accept them as political refugees.

Zuheir, a bachelor who has a degree in construction engineering, wanted a freer society than the Islamic Republic of Iran. "He could not walk in the street with bare shoulders," explained Edna Someh-Gideoni, chairwoman of the an Iranian women's advocacy group in Israel, who has become a foster mother to Zuheir and his friends. "He felt that he could not initiate contacts with women. He felt in prison."

Zuheir traveled to Syria from Iran in 1994, he says, spending spent six months in Damascus before deciding to try his luck in Israel. He managed to cross the border in the Golan Heights and turned himself in to the border police, believing that he would be treated like a political refugee. Instead, the authorities put him in jail.

So far, no country wants to claim Zuheir and the other prisoners. Although they are prisoners in Israel, they've never been tried or convicted of any crime.

Security forces suspected the Iraqi prisoners of espionage, but never pressed charges because of insufficient evidence. The Iraqis insist that they are innocent people who came to Israel in search of opportunities denied them in their native land.

Lawyer Yochi Gnessin, arguing on behalf of the state, said the fact that they had left Iraq carrying passports and visas indicated that they were not political refugees. He said they worked for a while in Jordan and then infiltrated into Israel.

"The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognized them as political refugees already in 1994," said Mickey Bavli, representative of the U.N. commissioner in Israel. "According to international law, the host country is obliged to grant them certain privileges, such as work permits, health services and dwelling rights."

The problem is that the prisoners came to Israel from enemy countries — and Israel, therefore, did not treat them like political refugees.

The solution now sought is to find a third country that will agree to absorb the prisoners.

"No country is willing to accept prisoners," said lawyer Zvi Rish, who represents the Iraqi prisoners. "They need to be released before the host country will take them, and Israel will not release them before a host country commits itself to take them."

And last week, when they showed up at the High Court of Justice, once again asking to be released, they were told that an invitation from an unidentified "third

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak confident about Syria

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he is confident Israeli-Syrian negotiations could resume in the coming weeks and that he and Syrian President Hafez Assad could quickly reach a peace agreement once they begin face-to-face talks.

Shortly after Barak made the optimistic comments on Saturday, the Syrian press rejected Barak's call for a summit meeting as a "public-relations job." The official daily Al-Thawra said Damascus was becoming disillusioned with Barak and less optimistic about chances for reviving Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which broke off in 1996.

Beilin to lobby against sanctions

Israel's justice minister plans to visit Washington this week in an attempt to convince U.S. officials not to impose trade sanctions in retaliation for an alleged rise in software piracy in Israel.

Noting that American officials are "talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars in economic sanctions," Yossi Beilin told Israel Radio on Sunday, "We must try to prevent this through intensive actions on our part." The U.S. Justice Department last month described Israel as the Western world's top copyright violator and the world center for the distribution of pirated software, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

Prank caller arrested

A transvestite who lobbies on behalf of prostitutes made the phone call to the Knesset two weeks ago falsely reporting legislator Amnon Rubinstein's death, Israeli police said.

Zalman Winder said after he was detained on Aug. 5 that he had made the call to draw attention to his mental state. Jerusalem police officials subsequently apologized to an elderly couple, identified as Haim, 70, and Viola, 68, whom they had questioned about the call and previously thought of indicting.



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.

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country" was imminent.

The prisoners looked desperate.

"Every time we come to court, there is a glimpse of hope, and then we go back to jail, waiting for the next court session," Ahmad told JTA as he was waiting for the judges to enter the court hall.

"We are like terminal patients, asking for a mercy-killing. We suffer for no reason," he said.

One new ray of hope is the appointment of Yossi Beilin as Israel's minister of justice. Beilin has already spoken out against the administrative detention of prisoners without trial.

A year and a half ago, Canada was ready to absorb the six Iraqis. But the country reversed its original decision to accept them after reports of the arrangement appeared in the Canadian media.

The prisoners are eager to get out of jail, but if they were to be deported to an Arab country, they would rather stay at the Sharon Prison.

"No one in the Arab countries would accept us as simple people," Ahmad said. "They will suspect that we had collaborated with the General Security Service and the Mossad."

Herut Lapid, who lives at Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar in the Galilee and who is known for his volunteer work in rehabilitating ex-convicts, has offered to absorb the prisoners in kibbutzim until a host country is found.

Israeli entertainer Dudu Topaz has also offered to help.

"I once visited them in jail and asked them why they had chosen Israel out of all countries for political asylum," Topaz said.

"Why, if I were to seek shelter from the income tax authorities, I would not do so in Iraq. They told me: 'We came to Israel because we believed that you are good people, that you have a kind heart.' That's why I am working on their behalf." □

Human-rights group tries to stop anti-Semitic TV in St. Petersburg

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A St. Petersburg-based human rights group and a team of lawyers are putting together a case to stop anti-Semitic broadcasts coming from the city-owned Petersburg Television.

The group, Citizens' Watch, accuses the city's major television channel of airing views by ultranationalists that incite national, racial and religious hatred, which is a criminal offense in Russia.

Last week, the channel's popular talk show "Sobytiya," or "Events," hosted a leader of the overtly anti-Semitic Russian Party, who delivered the group's call for "ethnic purges."

Nikolai Bondarik, who recently served a prison sentence for complicity in murder, used the show to express his anti-Semitic views.

"I don't like the Jews," Bondarik said. "Russians have made it to the cosmos, but Jews, they do nothing."

Anti-Semitic pronouncements are frequent at the television station, whose shareholders include members of the municipal and regional governments.

Recently, the station hosted a series of shows in which viewers were invited to take part in call-in polls asking whether "ethnic purges should be carried out in St. Petersburg" and whether "in the event of pogroms in St. Petersburg" viewers would take part in them or defend the victims.

In one of the polls, 58 percent of 2,295 callers voted in favor of physical participation in pogroms.

Local officials and human rights advocates insist that the results do not represent the prevailing mood in St. Petersburg, which was recently given the title of "Russia's cultural capital."

However, Russia's leading daily newspaper, Izvestia, reported the poll results under the headline "St. Pete Agrees To See Pogroms." □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish leaders meet king

American Jewish leaders made up the first delegation received by Morocco's new king, Mohammed VI, who assumed the throne following the July 23 death of his father, King Hassan II.

The king described as "historic" the Aug. 4 meeting with the leaders of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the president of the American Jewish Congress.

During the 45-minute session, the king stressed the importance of the Middle East peace process and told the delegation that Morocco would normalize relations with Israel as peace negotiations progress.

Moscow Jews offer reward

Moscow Jewish leaders are offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those who attempted to blow up a Lubavitch synagogue in the center of the Russian capital late last month.

A bomb was discovered July 25 in the Bolshaya Bronnaya synagogue and safely defused shortly before a ceremony attended by some 200 people, including many small children, was due to begin.

Israeli Embassy opens in Berlin

Modern-day Germans are right not to have feelings of guilt about the atrocities committed under the Third Reich, Israel's ambassador to Germany said.

"Older people were responsible, not the German people we know today," Avi Primor said last Friday, when the Israeli Embassy opened in Berlin.

Noting that Israelis think of Berlin as the "capital of the Third Reich and the headquarters of the Holocaust," Primor added, "We have mixed feelings, but for all it is a new era."

Ruling prompts anti-Semitic calls

Several members of the Jewish community in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan have been receiving anti-Semitic telephone calls after a local human-rights panel ordered a school board to stop allowing students to recite the Lord's Prayer in public schools.

Among those receiving such calls was Rabbi Steven Kaplan, leader of the 150-family Jewish community in the city of Saskatoon.

'Jew Store' to be filmed

Country music singer Dolly Parton plans to produce a film based on the book "The Jew Store," according to Variety magazine. Parton reportedly paid "low six figures" for the film rights to Stella Suberman's memoir about Jewish life in the American South. The book tells the story of the Bronson family, who moved in the 1920s from the Bronx to a small Tennessee town, where they owned a dry goods store, known to locals as "The Jew Store."

Heirs of French Holocaust victims to be compensated by British bank

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — One of Britain's largest financial institutions, Barclays Bank, is establishing a \$3.6 million fund to compensate the heirs of its Jewish customers in France whose accounts were seized during World War II.

In making the offer, the bank has broken with eight French financial institutions that were also named in a class-action suit in New York.

Barclays says it had some 230 Jewish customers in France when the bank was taken over by the German occupying authorities, but more may come forward when advertisements appear inviting potential claimants to contact the fund.

Any money left in the fund after claims are settled will be donated to Jewish charities that are involved in Holocaust education.

Chris Duncan, director of international and private banking at Barclays, said the bank believes that customers and their heirs obtained their accounts at the end of the war.

"But given the length of time, we have not got files that demonstrate that every last claim was paid out," he said. "That is why we have reached this agreement."

The settlement, which is based on the bank's 1 percent share of the French market in the war, is dwarfed by the \$1.25 billion fund agreed to by Swiss banks last August in response to a similar class-action suit.

The French banks have indicated they will continue to fight in the U.S. courts because they are participating in a settlement process overseen by the French Government.

"We are a bit different from the Swiss and French banks," Duncan said. "We have sought not to have a drawn out legal battle."

The French branch of Barclays was the subject of a scandal in March, when it was revealed that its wartime manager not only acted as the Nazis' banker during World War II but also volunteered to hand over Jewish employees.

The revelations came from material found in the U.S. National Archives by researchers working on a BBC television documentary, "Banking with Hitler," which examined the role of European central banks during the war.

According to the material, senior officials at the bank's Paris branch "volunteered" information about its Jewish employees to the Nazis and helped to arrange finance for projects that aided the Nazi war effort.

The records also show the bank received a substantial cash deposit from the Drancy transit camp in a Parisian suburb, which had been plundered from Jewish prisoners who were bound for Auschwitz.

According to material found in the archives, U.S. Treasury officials who conducted an investigation in France immediately after the war discovered an intimate collaboration between the British bank's French officials and the Nazis.

The report by the Treasury officials said then-bank manager Marcel Cheradame had been "very amenable to the wishes of the German administrator, Hans Joachim Caesar."

The report also describes how lime quarries in France were placed under German supervision for use by the German steel foundry Reichswerk Hermann Goering.

Cheradame, reported the Treasury officials, placed at the quarry's disposal "all the facilities of his bank, and particularly the capital required for the new installations suggested by the German administrator."

The officials concluded: "It is apparent from the letters that Cheradame, a Frenchman working for a British bank, saw no harm in being a party to a project" whose aim was "to lend British funds to a French enterprise for the purpose of making increased production for the German war machine."

The officials also found that French banks themselves seized a total of 3.5 billion old francs — about \$750 million in current values — from Jews on behalf of the Nazis.

Perhaps most surprising is not the denial by Barclays that it had any knowledge of the activities of its Paris branch during World War II, but that it continued to employ Cheradame as its Paris manager until he retired in the 1960s. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

**Turkey-Iran dispute heats up;
some worry about regional war***By Douglas Davis*

LONDON (JTA) — With international attention firmly fixed on the slowly evolving Middle East peace process, there are growing anxieties about the possibility of war between Turkey and Iran.

The gathering conflict between the two non-Arab nations — Turkey, Israel's closest regional ally, and Iran, its most bitter foe — is over a small triangle of territory bounded by Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The question now facing Israel's military analysts and strategic planners is whether Jerusalem can stand on the sidelines if tensions between Turkey and Iran explode into war.

According to the Turks, who bombed the triangle twice last month, it is part of the Western-protected no-fly zone of northern Iraq, which is out of bounds to Iraq and was stealthily annexed by Iran in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War.

The area is now home, they say, to an Iranian-backed training camp of the separatist Kurdish Workers Party.

Iran insists the territory has always been Iranian.

It has vigorously protested the Turkish attack and what it claims was a subsequent incursion by Turkish troops.

The London-based Arabic media, unable to decide which is the lesser of the two evils — pro-Israel Turkey or revolutionary Iran — have confined themselves to expressing concern that the two states are drifting inexorably toward a “devastating” war.

Tensions heightened last month when Ankara, after accusing Tehran of aiding Turkish Kurd rebels, charged that Iran had seized the disputed triangle.

The London-based, Saudi-owned al-Hayat reported that Turkish President Suleyman Demirel had bluntly warned Iran not to equate Ankara's “patience” with weakness.

Countries that have differences with Turkey, he warned ominously, are “fully aware of our strength,” and it would not be in Iran's interests to “miscalculate,” the strength of Turkey's anger.

This was a clear reference to Ankara's threats last year to take military action against Syria unless it halted activities of the Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK, on its territory and expelled PKK chief Abdullah Ocalan.

Damascus complied, and Turkish commandos subsequently seized Ocalan in Kenya.

Demirel's remarks were a response to a statement by the commander of Iran's land forces, Brig. Gen. Abdolali Pourshasb, that last month's Iranian military exercises formed part of preparations to “repel those who would violate Iran's airspace and international borders.”

Iran has accused Turkey of violating its air space and border in two incidents, including a July 18 air strike on its border outposts near the mainly Kurdish town of Piranshahr, in which five people were killed and 11 wounded.

Ankara responded by accusing Iran of harboring PKK rebels, a charge that Tehran was quick to deny.

In remarks carried by the Turkish media, Turkey's chief of staff, Huseyin Kivrikoglu, denied that Turkish warplanes had attacked targets inside Iran, saying the planes had hit PKK bases in northern Iraq.

Kivrikoglu, a central figure in last year's drive against Syria, suggested he saw PKK activity in Iran as a new threat.

“Neither Iraq nor Iran can maintain control in that region,” he was quoted as saying.

“We know the PKK has bases in Iran. They're [setting up] camps in Iran and crossing from there into Iraq, and then into Turkey.”

Kivrikoglu's public comments, rare in themselves, coincided with claims by the chief of Turkey's air forces, Gen. Ilhan Kilic, that Iran was collaborating with the PKK.

“Our planes bombed a PKK camp inside the northern Iraq border,” Kilic told the Turkish daily Milliyet. “There were Iranian officers at the camp and they died.”

Referring to recent student demonstrations in Iran, Kilic said Iran's “internal affairs” were “fairly chaotic at the moment.

“I imagine they want the attention elsewhere,” he added. “That is why they are behaving like this.”

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem has met Iran's ambassador to Turkey, Mohammad Hussein Lavasani, and requested the immediate return of two Turkish border guards who Tehran claim were captured during a Turkish military incursion into the triangle last week.

Abderrahman Rashed, editor of another London-based Saudi daily, Asharq al-Awsat, warned that while Turkey's global anti-PKK campaign might be justified, it should stop short of armed conflict with Iran, as the cost would be prohibitive for both sides.

Events, he said, are currently moving in the direction of a war between Turkey and Iran. This might be favored by some in Tehran who are anxious to deflect attention from Iran's domestic tensions.

But with Turkey and Iran each possessing arsenals that would enable them to fight for a decade, such a war would be devastating, warned Rashed.

Turkey, he continued, is intent on a fight to the finish against the Kurdish rebels and it has declared it would chase the separatists wherever they are — be it Iran, Syria, or even Africa and Europe.

But its current campaign, warned Rashed, will lead to war with Iran unless reason prevails on both sides.

Turkey is today in search of a new role following the end of the Cold War, when geopolitics gave it a significant role — on the southern flank of the former Soviet Union and in control of the strait that is vital for Russian exports.

In terms of regional relations, Turkey's late president, Turgut Ozal, chose to turn southward to the Arab world. But after Ozal's death in 1993, Ankara chose to forge a close military relationship with Israel against Syria and Iran.

The decision, say analysts, was taken in the belief that this would compensate Turkey for its eroding role in NATO and turn it into a major regional power in an area from which its influence has been largely absent since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. □

Israelis to lobby against Arrow

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Residents of communities in Central Israel plan to lobby against a proposal to erect an Arrow anti-missile base in their area, Israel Radio reported.

The residents say radiation from the system's radar poses a health risk and that the base itself would turn the area into a strategic target. □