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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel, Mauritania to form ties

Israel and Mauritania plan to establish full diplomatic ties Thursday. Located in northwest Africa, Mauritania is an Islamic country and a member of the Arab League.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who plans to be in Washington for the signing ceremony, is also expected to update U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the peace process. [Page 4]

Lott commits to Wye aid

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) told pro-Israel activists he is committed to funding the Clinton administration's request for a \$1.8 billion aid package for Israel, the Palestinians and Jordan to implement last year's Wye agreement.

During a lunch Tuesday with representatives of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Lott said he would "do everything within his power to get it funded as soon as possible," according to the group's spokesman, Kenneth Bricker.

Lott had recently expressed concerns about the implementation of the agreement, saying Congress needs "to be careful about providing the money before the actions are taken."

U.S. bill passed on Israeli MIAs

The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill directing the State Department to investigate the cases of three Israeli MIAs.

The bill, which already passed the Senate, directs State Department officials to raise the issue of the missing soldiers, including U.S. citizen Zachary Baumel, with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

The Orthodox Union, which has lobbied for the bill, urged President Clinton to sign the legislation.

Buchanan stirs pot on Israel

Presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan accused one of his critics of putting Israel's interests before America's. During an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America" on Tuesday, he said New York Times columnist William Safire "has always put Israel a little bit ahead of his own country."

The comment came after Safire wrote a column criticizing Buchanan's comments about Jewish influence on American foreign policy.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Barred from partisan politics, groups must muzzle their views on Buchanan

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In recent weeks, Jewish groups have publicly criticized the views expressed by Pat Buchanan that Nazi Germany posed no threat to the United States and that America did not have to enter World War II.

But when Buchanan announced this week that he was leaving the Republican Party to seek the Reform Party's presidential nomination — and staked out a strong isolationist stance in his announcement — there was little Jewish reaction.

The relative silence illustrates the delicate line Jewish groups — which because of their nonprofit status cannot engage in partisan politics or electioneering — have to walk when it comes to taking on candidates whose views they find disagreeable.

Buchanan, a conservative columnist who ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1992 and 1996, has long been accused of anti-Semitism by columnists, politicians and Jewish organizations. It is a charge he denies.

In announcing his decision and unveiling his agenda Monday to several hundred supporters chanting "Go, Pat, Go," Buchanan said the United States should phase out foreign aid, curtail its intervention overseas and implement a "timeout" in legal immigration.

It was a "very difficult day" for Jewish groups who could not respond, one Jewish activist said.

It is "difficult to know how far you can go and where exactly you have to stop," said an attorney for the Anti-Defamation League.

The Internal Revenue Service can strip a nonprofit organization of its tax-exempt status if it determines that the group engaged in election politics, the attorney said, adding that the IRS "does not provide a lot of guidance."

Indeed, officials at Jewish organizations such as the ADL and the American Jewish Congress, which have publicly criticized Buchanan's views, would not comment on Buchanan's party switch, saying that as nonprofit, nonpolitical groups, they could not comment on such matters.

Phil Baum, executive director of the AJCongress, noted that the group's recent half-page ad in The New York Times denouncing Buchanan's writings did not refer to the presidential election. At the time of the ad, Buchanan was seeking the Republican presidential nomination.

After Buchanan's book, "A Republic, Not an Empire," came out last month, the ADL put out a news release saying that "we find it extremely disturbing that Pat Buchanan continues to find mainstream political acceptance when his views place him far outside the mainstream."

The release did not mention that Buchanan was seeking the Republican nomination, but it did say that it had asked all the other Republican nominees to "denounce Pat Buchanan's anti-Semitism and bigotry."

This week the ADL put out a backgrounder on the Reform Party itself and two of the party's activists, Fred Newman and Lenora Fulani, who the ADL said have espoused anti-Semitism in the years they were involved with the now-defunct New Alliance Party.

It also has a "special report" on its Web site titled "Pat Buchanan: In His Own Words."

Gail Gans, director of the ADL's Civil Rights Information Center, said that since

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.S. envoy launches talks

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross began talks in Jerusalem aimed at persuading Israel and the Palestinian Authority to move quickly toward reaching a final peace agreement. "Now is the time to get down to business" and "turn what is a hope into a reality," Ross said Wednesday.

Barak, Abdullah mark treaty

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak telephoned Jordan's King Abdullah to mark the fifth anniversary of the two countries' peace treaty.

"Today, we remember the legacy of King Hussein," Barak said Wednesday, adding that it was his "political courage," as well as that of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, that led to the historic Oct. 26, 1994, agreement.

Abdullah thanked Barak and asked him to convey his best wishes to "all those who were party to concluding the agreement and to the Israeli people."

Bethlehem funeral spurs clashes

Some 200 Palestinians hurled stones at Israeli soldiers for a third straight day in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. Wednesday's demonstration took place during the funeral of a Palestinian souvenir vendor killed Monday by an Israeli soldier.

The soldier shot the vendor, who allegedly tried to stab him.

Falafel to fly to the moon

NASA's administrator spoke to pro-Israel activists Monday evening about the new partnership between America's space agency and Israel.

During a lighter moment, Daniel Goldin joked that Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, who is slated to be the first Israeli to take part in a space shuttle mission next year, could tell his mother about the freeze-dried delicacies he will eat in space. "The freeze-dried falafel is out of this world," Goldin quipped.



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it is classified as a nonprofit by the IRS, the group can't appear to be supporting or opposing individual candidates but can discuss issues within the political parties.

Representatives of Democratic and Republican Jewish groups, as political activists, do not have to be so restrained.

Ira Forman, the executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, said if Buchanan wins the Reform Party nomination, "he will have a platform to spew his anti-Semitism and other xenophobic policies."

"You don't have the luxury of ignoring this guy anymore," Forman said, noting that Buchanan, if he is the nominee, will have access to nearly \$13 million in matching federal funds and could be included in the presidential debates.

However, Matt Brooks, the executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, cautioned against making Buchanan into a Jewish issue.

"Pat Buchanan is an American problem, not a Jewish problem," he said.

Brooks said Republicans and Democrats will likely ignore Buchanan if he is the Reform nominee until he proves he is gaining significant support. Various polls have shown Buchanan receiving 5 to 9 percent of the vote.

"You focus on your real opponents, not your imagined opponents," Brooks said.

In his speech, Buchanan also called for an end to affirmative action and said all Americans should learn English and a common history of American heroes.

"The backsliding toward hyphenated Americanism must end," he said.

Buchanan also appeared to call for school vouchers, which give parents funds to send their children to private or parochial schools. Jewish groups are split over the voucher issue.

"If I'm elected president, the bureaucrats at the Department of Education are not going to be testing kids, they're going to be testing the magic of the marketplace," he said.

When asked for his reaction to Buchanan's call to halt legal immigration, Leonard Glickman, executive vice president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, said it was "shortsighted" and failed to recognize the contributions immigrants can and have made to the country.

"This kind of nativism really has no place on our country's agenda," he said. □

Schindler widow seeks rights to husband's found belongings

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — The 92-year-old widow of Oskar Schindler is questioning the right of a German newspaper to the ownership of a suitcase that her late husband left with friends before he died in 1974.

The documents it contains, including letters and a copy of the famous list of Jews whom Schindler rescued during the war, "belong to me, because I am the widow and legal heir of Oskar Schindler," said Emilie Schindler in an interview published recently in the German news magazine Stern.

Emilie Schindler, who lives in a small town outside Buenos Aires, said she did not know the couple with whom Schindler had left the suitcase and hadn't even spoken to her husband since the late 1950s, when he left her and returned to Germany.

She said she would have to see the documents before she could confirm their authenticity.

Emilie Schindler, whose memoirs have been published in Germany under the title "In Schindler's Shadow," remains bitter over her relationship with Oskar Schindler. She once told a Jewish group in New York that he had "run around with women in lavish hotels and gave his money away."

According to the Stuttgart Zeitung, which has the suitcase, Schindler's suitcase has been in the attic of his close friends since his death. After the friends passed away, their children, who live in Stuttgart, discovered the suitcase and entrusted it to the newspaper.

The newspaper plans to give the contents of the suitcase to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. □

JEWISH WORLD

Hate crimes provisions pushed

Jewish groups, civil rights organizations and lawmakers called on Congress to pass tougher hate crimes provisions before it adjourns later this fall.

Wednesday's call came two days after President Clinton vetoed a spending bill because the provisions were stripped from the legislation.

Rabin's murder marked

Jews in New York commemorated the fourth anniversary of the assassination of Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin.

Among those speaking at Tuesday's event, organized by the Israeli Consulate, the UJA-Federation of New York and the New York Jewish Community Relations Council, was former Rabin aide Eitan Haber.

Haber quoted Rabin as saying, "In all the memories stored up in my 72 years, what I will remember most are the silences" before and after giving military orders that were certain to end lives.

Swiss knew of Papon's flight

The Swiss Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that it had learned a convicted Nazi collaborator would flee France two weeks before he came across the border to Switzerland. But the ministry did not act on the information regarding Maurice Papon.

A spokesman for the ministry told JTA he did not know why the information had not been turned over to the Swiss border police so that they could have blocked Papon's entry.

Swiss officials returned Papon to France last Friday, when he began serving a 10-year jail sentence for complicity in the deportation of some 1,500 French Jews during the Nazi occupation.

Vatican to beatify different pope

The Vatican will slow down the process of making Pope Pius XII a saint, according to an official with the World Jewish Congress. At the same time, said WJC Executive Director Elan Steinberg, the Roman Catholic Church is moving actively to beatify Pope John XXII.

Unlike Pius, who is criticized for his failure to speak out against the Holocaust, John is remembered fondly by Jews.

John convened the Second Vatican Council, which in 1965 removed from church doctrine the accusation that Jews were responsible for Jesus' death.

Jackson speaks to blacks, Jews

The Rev. Jesse Jackson delivered the keynote address at the third annual conference on black-Jewish relations at Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work. His speech Wednesday focused on forging economic ties between African Americans and American Jews.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Tiny Klan group makes a big noise; rally's violence plays into its hands

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Last weekend's Ku Klux Klan demonstration in New York was a public relations coup for a small and fractured segment of the hatemongering community, experts say.

The leader of the Church of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, John Berry, was able to catapult his group into national headlines amid a week of legal wrangling. At the Oct. 23 rally, seven counterdemonstrators were arrested, including one Brooklyn Jew who assaulted a Klansman.

While experts differ how a Klan rally should be combated, with some in favor of a peaceful counter-rally, and others calling for an alternative celebration of multiculturalism and tolerance, they all say that violence plays into Berry's hands.

The violence "is what Berry hopes for. The Klan needs that type of vitriol from the crowd," said David Goldman, the director of hatewatch.org, which monitors hate on the Internet. "What Berry needs is having people yell invectives at him, to give him the middle finger. It gives him a way to make it a real news story."

Only about 15 Klansmen marched — silently, because they were denied a sound permit — after a New York judge ruled that they could not wear their traditional masks, while there were an estimated 6,000 counterdemonstrators.

In recent years, the Klan has lost popularity among young, alienated white males. Instead, these men, the largest audience for hate groups, have been attracted to other white supremacist groups that are cobbling together an ideology that combines an anti-government message to go with their racism and anti-Semitism. These groups, such as the World Church of the Creator, have also been more adept at using the Internet to get their message out, although their actual membership is also small.

"The Klan is a Johnny-come-lately to the anti-government message," said Gail Gans, the director of the Civil Rights Information Center at the Anti-Defamation League.

The Klan, which is actually an umbrella term for a number of groups that have an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 members nationwide, has also become fractured and splintered between those who "want to dress in shirts and ties and talk about white rights, and the old-fashioned Klansmen who want to say, 'We hate everybody who isn't white,'" said Chip Berlet, a senior analyst at Political Research Associates, a nonprofit group in Somerville, Mass.

David Duke, a former Klansman and a putative candidate for political office in Louisiana, represents the "shirt-and-tie" approach, while Berry is a symbol of those who want to hew to the Klan's hard line, as evidenced by the Nazi salute the marchers flashed at the end of the rally.

"Berry has staked out an area for himself as the most outspoken, the most bigoted, the most outrageous of the Klan wizards, and that has a certain attraction for people looking for a hate organization," Goldman said.

Berry, who formed the American Knights in 1995, has become a publicity hound to attract attention for his group, which has fewer than 300 members.

Berry has gone on Jerry Springer's television talk show and has staged rallies in Cleveland and Orlando, Fla. In the past few years, Berry's group has stuffed KKK fliers inside free newspapers in several states.

While his rallies draw few supporters, Berry has made good use of the publicity. He craftily staged the rally in Cleveland in August, the same weekend as an exposition of black professionals and the first game in the Cleveland Browns' new football stadium.

Despite the small number of supporters he attracts, the desire to stage a counter-rally is both understandable and commendable, Berlet said.

"When you're demonstrating against hate groups, you're not demonstrating against the small number of individuals at the rally, you're demonstrating because you have an obligation to history," he said. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

Frost begins to melt in Israel's relations with Islamic countries*By Gil Sedan*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's new relations with Mauritania illustrates the progress the Jewish state is making in establishing diplomatic ties with Arab and Muslim nations.

Located in northwest Africa, Mauritania is an Islamic country and a member of the Arab League. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy was expected to be in Washington for Thursday's ceremony between the two nations at the U.S. State Department.

Both Israel and the United States view the step being taken by Israel and Mauritania "as a milestone in the promotion of normalization" between Israel and Islamic states, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

Israel and Mauritania previously had low-level ties. In May 1996, Mauritania opened an economic office in Tel Aviv.

Diplomatic relations with the countries of North Africa are especially important because of Israel's large population of North African emigres, who retain an emotional attachment to the countries where their families lived for centuries.

In another sign that Israel's diplomatic estrangement from Islamic nations is undergoing a change, Indonesia's newly elected president reportedly stated last week that he favors dialogue with Israel. Abdurrahman Wahid visited Israel a number of times to receive medical treatment, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The newspaper also said he took part in a gathering organized two years ago by the Peres Center for Peace and visited the grave of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, does not have diplomatic ties with Israel. But the two countries have maintained contacts through intermediaries.

In Pakistan, meanwhile, the general who two weeks ago toppled that nation's democratically elected government reportedly assured Jerusalem he will not change the Muslim country's policy toward Israel. According to diplomatic sources cited by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Gen. Pervez Musharraf sent such a message to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office via the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency.

Israel and Pakistan do not have diplomatic relations, but the two countries have been in regular contact through their representatives at the United Nations.

Barak's office would not comment on the Ha'aretz report.

Another diplomatic possibility — involving Algeria — opened up over the weekend, when the president of the North African nation held talks with Israeli Cabinet ministers Shimon Peres and Shlomo Ben-Ami during a regional conference near Spain.

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whose country does not have diplomatic ties with Israel, told a reporter from the Israeli daily Yedioth Achronot that Algeria would consider establishing ties with Israel only after treaties are reached with Syria and Lebanon.

The new Algerian leader made headlines in July when he exchanged brief remarks with Israeli officials at the funeral of Morocco's King Hassan II.

Bouteflika shook hands with Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the funeral — for which the Algerian president later apologized in interviews with the Arab media, charging that Barak had "am-

bushed" him. Just the same, Bouteflika has apparently joined the growing club of world leaders who believe the way to U.S. foreign aid runs through Jerusalem.

"Bouteflika sends a message of peace," Nawaf Masalha, Israel's deputy minister of foreign affairs, told JTA this week. "If there is progress in the negotiations with Syria, Algeria will be the first to follow suit."

Two of Algeria's neighbors — Morocco and Tunisia — have long had diplomatic dealings with Israel. Relations between Israel and Morocco, which had cooled during the government of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have recently warmed.

Morocco's new king, Mohammad VI — like King Abdullah of Jordan has done since the death of his father, King Hussein — is attempting to strengthen ties with the Jewish state.

Sam Ben-Shitrit, one of the leaders of the Moroccan community in Israel, returned full of enthusiasm from a visit last week to Morocco.

"I cannot overstate the treatment they gave me," he told JTA. "I was interviewed on local television on prime time."

Two years after Israel and Morocco took their first formal diplomatic steps, similar steps took place involving Tunisia.

In April 1996, Israel opened an economic interest office in Tunisia, and Tunis reciprocated the following month.

When the peace process stalled under the Netanyahu government, Tunisia called back its representative in Israel.

Israeli representative Shalom Cohen remained at his offices in the Tunis Hilton hotel, almost in total diplomatic isolation.

But his patience ultimately paid off. Tunisia last month returned its emissary to Tel Aviv.

Italy recently tried to mediate and thaw relations between Israel and another North African country — Libya.

But Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi, whose relations with the West improved considerably after he extradited earlier this year the two suspects wanted in connection with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbee, Scotland, reportedly said "the time was not ripe" for any moves toward Israel.

While new diplomatic initiatives open up for Israel, relations with the two Arab countries with which the Jewish state has signed formal peace treaties — Egypt and Jordan — continue to vacillate with the ebb and flow of the peace process.

Egypt, which signed a peace agreement with Israel in March 1979, continues to have what has widely been described as a "cold peace" with the Jewish state. With decades of distrust and hostility needing to be overcome, the normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt is a long and arduous process.

Just the same, reciprocal visits of businessmen and experts in various fields have become commonplace, and airline and bus routes operate daily between the two countries.

The Sinai Desert has become a prime Israeli tourist destination, but because of the cool diplomatic atmosphere — and sporadic terrorist incidents — fewer Israelis visit Cairo or other destinations within Egypt proper than in the years immediately after the signing of the peace treaty.

Israel's relations with Jordan continue to have their share of ups and downs, but they are still warmer than with any other Arab country. Despite the difficulties, King Abdullah seems determined to develop relations with Israel.

"All depends on the peace process," said Masalha. "As long as it flows, the Arabs will develop their contacts with us." □