



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 213

Monday, November 15, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Hillary defends delayed response

Hillary Rodham Clinton defended her delay in responding to Suha Arafat's comments last week that Israel had used poison gas to pollute the water and land of the West Bank.

The U.S. first lady said she did not respond right away because the remarks, made in her presence, were not as harsh in the English translation that she heard. [Page 3]

Israel's word accepted on China

The United States accepted Israel's assurances that it did not transfer U.S. technology to China.

"We have discussed the issue with Israel and we have no reason to believe it involves U.S.-controlled technology," State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

His comment came after Israel's Defense Ministry released a statement saying that the sophisticated airborne radar system it sold to China "utilizes purely Israeli technology."

Settlers return to hilltop outpost

Israeli security forces scuffled with Jewish settlers attempting to reclaim a hilltop outpost in the West Bank. Some 30 settlers returned to Maon Farm last Friday, according to a spokesman for the forces, which arrested seven settlers who refused to leave the area. A day later, a group of settlers, hiding near Maon, beat Palestinian farmers with sticks. Four of the farmers were lightly wounded and taken to an Israeli hospital for treatment, the army said.

Israel dispatches help to Turkey

Israel sent a 300-member rescue team to Turkey to help search for survivors of last Friday's earthquake. It also sent a medical team to set up a field hospital. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee sent thousands of sleeping bags, blankets and other aid for the quake's victims.

Court OKs tearing down shrine

Israel's Supreme Court upheld the army's decision to tear down a shrine at the grave of a Jewish settler who in 1994 killed 29 Muslims praying at Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs. The judges said keeping the shrine to Baruch Goldstein would send a message of praise for the crime.

TEN YEARS AFTER THE WALL

As Romanian Jews near extinction, their leaders come up with a revival

By Ruth E. Gruber

BUCHAREST, Romania (JTA) — Romania's Jewish leaders have approved an ambitious program of youth and leadership development as a belated, last-ditch effort to prevent the extinction of Romanian Jewry.

"We now are at the last moment in which we can do something," warned Tibor Kovari, coordinator of Talmud Torah education around the country.

"If the Romanian Jewish community doesn't do something now, then there is no future."

The plan, approved during a late October meeting in Bucharest, would totally revamp the community's outmoded study program for young children.

It would also create new programs for Jewish teen-agers, college students and the so-called "middle generation" — which in Romania encompasses people aged 25 to 65.

The new programs look good on paper, but it remains to be seen just how much can be accomplished against a backdrop of economic and social crisis and a Jewish community that, since the end of World War II, has seen little hope for continuity.

Indeed, the decision to bolster education and culture programs, initiate youth organizations and reach out to unaffiliated or disaffected Jews represents a net reversal in the official Jewish communal mind-set.

For decades, the pattern of Jewish life in Romania has been to encourage aliyah among young people and, with the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, to make sure that the elderly who can't or won't move to Israel live out their lives in dignity.

Today, about 12,000 Jews are known to live in Romania. About half of them live in Bucharest and the rest in more than 40 communities scattered around the country, some with only a handful of members.

Almost every young Romanian Jew assumed that he or she would make aliyah after college.

Even after the fall of communism, when Jewish communities in other post-Communist countries took advantage of new freedoms to begin furthering Jewish education and championing communal development, little was done to break this mold.

"I see no future in Romania, either as a Jew or as a Romanian," says Gabriel, a university student in Bucharest. "The only thing that might stop me making aliyah to Israel as soon as I get my degree is that my parents are old and still live in a small town here, and I don't want to leave them alone."

Throughout Romania, unemployment is high and inflation mounting; the currency has dropped precipitously against Western currencies; the government is tainted by corruption, inefficiency and infighting.

Salaries can be well below \$100 a month.

A cold snap in October left hundreds of thousands of city dwellers without heat because they couldn't afford to pay their bills.

"Psychological attitudes here are really a problem," said a staff member of the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities who works with social welfare programs. "Two or three years ago, people talked about light at the end of the tunnel. But they didn't even find a candle."

The assumption that most Jews would emigrate meant that for years the community paid only lip service to developing local communal spirit among youth and targeting

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak may shuffle security chiefs

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is considering making changes in Israel's security services.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Barak may appoint Shin Bet chief Ami Ayalon to head the Mossad and name reserve Gen. Amiram Levine, currently deputy head of the Mossad, to Ayalon's present position.

Bank of Israel governor resigns

The governor of the Bank of Israel resigned Sunday, Israel Radio reported. No immediate explanations were given for Jacob Frenkel's resignation. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has reportedly already begun a search for a successor.

George W. Bush praises Israel

The front-runner in the race for the Republican presidential nomination praised Israel.

Israel "is the only democracy in the Middle East," Gov. George W. Bush told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. "I will work to maintain and strengthen our ties with Israel. That is a clear-cut American interest."

Export rules on Jordan eased

Israel agreed to ease restrictions on Jordanian exports to the West Bank. As a result of the decision, Jordanian trucks will be allowed to deliver their goods directly to the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Paper blames Israel for crash

An Egyptian newspaper is blaming Israel for the recent crash of EgyptAir Flight 990. "I am certain that Israel's fingers are not far away," the editor of the opposition paper Al Wafd wrote in a front-page column.

"When Israel finds an 'Egyptian gift' of 33 Egyptian military officers from all branches on one civilian plane and who just ended their training in the United States, it will not miss this opportunity."



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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young individuals for future leadership training. This attitude was challenged outside official communal structures in 1998, when the New York-based Ronald S. Lauder Foundation opened a modern school for young children in Bucharest.

The Lauder school, considered the best in the city, has attracted much of its student body from the non-Jewish Romanian and resident foreign population.

Meanwhile, standards for existing Jewish community-run programs for children and students plummeted.

A new computer center was opened a few years ago in the northern city of Iasi, but it was accessible only one hour a week.

In Galati, the Jewish children's choir director withheld snacks because too few children came to practice. In one city, children were seen to be threatened physically if they didn't go to synagogue.

"In conditions like this, why should we wonder that the kids are not attracted?" asked Sandra Segal, director of youth and education development for the Romanian community.

The numbers tell the story.

Half of Romania's Jews — about 400,000 people — survived the Holocaust. In the biggest Jewish exodus from Europe until the mass flight from the former Soviet Union in recent years, almost all of them made aliyah.

This was thanks to the extraordinary career of Rabbi Moses Rosen, a colorful and controversial figure who served as chief rabbi from 1948 until his death in 1994.

Rosen ran the community with an iron hand.

He carried on a difficult and potentially dangerous juggling act, trading off public servility to the Communist regime for religious and community rights for Romania's Jews, including the right to emigrate. Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was the only Communist leader not to break relations with Israel after the Six-Day War in 1967.

The constant emigration of most young people once they hit their early 20s, and assimilation by most of those who opt to stay, has left a huge gap in generations.

Of the 12,000 Jews now remaining, most are pensioners. Fewer than 700 are under the age of 35. Fewer still are middle-age adults.

"There is a 40- to 50-year age difference between the two active generations of the community, and we all need to admit that we need each other," said Kovari, one of the few Jews who chose to remain in Romania after college and lead a committed Jewish life.

"The young people need the community activity, without which they will probably lose their Jewish identity and, in time, become completely assimilated," he said. "But the federation needs the young people, too, as a guarantee that this community is not dying."

Paradoxically, numbers of community members have remained fairly constant in recent years, despite the fact that the community annually loses as many as 1,000 or more members due to death and emigration.

"It's like the miracle of Chanukah," says Zvi Feine, the JDC's country director for Romania.

The reason for this is that unaffiliated Jews constantly step forward to join the community, in a large part for the social welfare benefits — and also for the possibility of emigrating. Supported by the JDC, the Federation of Romanian Jews runs 11 kosher canteens around the country, provides hundreds of meals on wheels for the homebound, and runs clinics, pharmacies and other social welfare programs.

Many Jews would simply not be able to live without this support.

"Everyone wants to leave because of the economic situation," said an employee of the federation. "But Jews have the option to do so.

"In addition," he said, "elderly people are coming to us for aid, people who never had any contact with the community. I ask them why they are coming now. They say, 'Because I'm starving' — and it's true."

Non-Jews, too, sometimes try to join the community, for the welfare programs and the possibility to make aliyah.

The numbers of inquiries are such that Chief Rabbi Menachem Hakohen has taped a sign to the outside of his door:

"We don't convert people to Judaism."



JEWISH WORLD

France to compensate orphans

French Jews who were orphaned as children during the Holocaust will receive compensation from the state, according to Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.

In his annual speech to French Jewish leaders, Jospin said Saturday that children whose parents were deported from France by the pro-Nazi Vichy regime will get either a lump sum or a monthly pension of about \$500 under a program to be outlined in the coming weeks.

Austrian extremist apologizes

Austrian far-right leader Jorg Haider apologized for sympathetic statements he has made about Hitler and the SS. During a speech in Vienna, he said his remarks "were certainly insensitive or open to misunderstanding," and told Austrian Jews that they should not be afraid of his party, which came in second in elections last month.

Agency officials visit Caucasus

The Jewish Agency for Israel recently visited an orphans home in Russia's Caucasus Mountains. The visit was part of the group's efforts to help young, elderly and disabled Jews who are isolated by the war between Russia and Muslim insurgents in Chechnya.

Clergy apologizes for Inquisition

Spanish priests, monks and nuns apologized for the role their forebearers played in the Inquisition. The move by the president of the Conference of Spanish Religious Workers came after the Roman Catholic Church has made similar apologies for past sins as the year 2000 approaches.

Outgoing envoy says goodbyes

Israel's outgoing ambassador to the United States met with U.S. lawmakers during a round of farewell meetings.

Zalman Shoval met Wednesday with members of the Senate at a gathering hosted by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.). Shoval also met with members of the House International Relations Committee, giving lawmakers his views on the status of the Middle East peace process. Shoval's replacement, David Ivry, is expected to take up his post early next year.

U.S. challenged on Nazi trial

A Lithuanian judge is asking the U.S. Justice Department to prove its contention that an alleged Nazi war criminal is faking illness to avoid trial.

Former U.S. citizen Aleksandras Lileikis, 92, is accused of handing over scores of Jews to Nazi death squads during World War II. In September, a Lithuanian court suspended Lileikis' trial indefinitely, citing his poor health.

Hillary's critics slam slow reaction to Arafat's wife's 'poison' accusation

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was detoured into a political minefield during her trip to the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Clinton, considering a run for a New York seat in the U.S. Senate, had tried to keep the focus on youth and social issues. But Suha Arafat, the wife of the Palestinian Authority president, thrust Clinton into controversy when she accused Israel of poisoning the Palestinian population.

"Our people have been submitted to the daily and intensive use of poisonous gas by the Israeli forces which has led to an increase in cancer cases among women and children," Arafat said last week.

She also claimed that Israel had contaminated 80 percent of Palestinian water sources with "chemical materials."

Critics, including Jewish political leaders in New York, were soon lashing out at Clinton for sitting stone-faced during Arafat's accusations.

She was also criticized for kissing Arafat at the end of the Nov. 11 event in the West Bank town of Ramallah, where she presented a U.S. grant of some \$4 million for the creation of prenatal care centers.

One day later, during a visit to Jordan, Clinton issued her criticism of Arafat's remarks, saying inflammatory comments could damage the peace process.

"Everyone who supports this effort toward resolving the outstanding issues among the parties should refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and from baseless accusations," Clinton said last Friday.

She also suggested that she did not respond immediately to Arafat's comments because they were not as harsh in the English translation she had heard.

The incident in Ramallah provided Clinton's likely opponent in the Senate race, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, with an opportunity to score points with the city's Jewish voters. According to a recent poll, Clinton and Giuliani are in a dead heat for the New York Senate seat.

Giuliani said last Friday that if he had been invited to the West Bank event, "I don't think I would have been there."

If he had gone, Giuliani added, he would certainly have objected to Arafat's comments. "I certainly wouldn't have embraced the person that said it — hugged them and kissed them," the mayor said.

Other Clinton critics put the focus on her lack of an immediate response to Arafat's accusations.

"I hope that Hillary gets out of the race," said New York Assemblyman Dov Hikind, a Jewish political leader in Brooklyn. "To listen to this kind of horrible, anti-Semitic rhetoric and not say anything is immoral. It's cowardice. And it makes it very difficult for the Jewish community to support her."

The Zionist Organization of America "condemned" Clinton for saying "nothing to dispute Mrs. Arafat's blood libel against Israel."

Arafat was also targeted for criticism both in Israel and the United States.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak demanded that the Palestinian Authority prevent incitement and condemn Arafat's remarks.

The White House also weighed in.

"I think the remarks that were made yesterday were inconsistent with the spirit of the agreement the leaders made to provide for a constructive and positive atmosphere to move forward in this peace process," presidential spokesman Joe Lockhart said last Friday.

Palestinian officials, meanwhile, made attempts at damage control, saying Arafat had not intended to embarrass the first lady and mixed up her words.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat expressed regret for the remarks, telling Reuters that Arafat had intended to say "tear gas" instead of "poison gas."

The first lady's trip to Israel went more smoothly for her. She visited the Western Wall and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, where she laid a wreath. □

OBITUARY**Argentine activist remembered for his devotion to human rights***By Nicolas Penchaszadeh*

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Jacobo Timerman, a former Argentine political prisoner and lifelong Zionist, died here Nov. 11 at 76 after suffering a heart attack.

Timerman, an outspoken and controversial journalist, was best known for his 1981 book on his time in prison, "Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number," which he wrote from exile in Israel. In it, he detailed his 30 months under house arrest in Argentina during the late 1970s, when Argentina's military junta killed thousands of people.

After he was released, he went to Israel, where he did not shy away from criticizing the Jewish state, particularly Israel's role in the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which he chronicled in his book "The Longest War."

But he was also not shy of attacking Palestinian terrorism.

His criticism of both sides of the Middle East conflict resulted from his personal philosophy, which he described as "a world that at times took the form of Zionism, at times the struggle for human rights, at times the fight for freedom of expression and at other times again the solidarity with dissidents against all totalitarianisms."

Timerman was born in Bar, Ukraine, in 1923. His family emigrated to Argentina when he was 5.

Timerman remembered that as a child living in Buenos Aires' traditional Jewish neighborhood, he once asked his mother: "Why do they hate us?" Her response: "They don't understand us."

He spent the rest of his life trying to find a better answer.

Timerman began his career in journalism writing for Jewish publications in Argentina, later moving on to Agence France Press and major local newspapers until he revolutionized the trade with his own publications. Because of his strong opinions, he made many enemies, even within the field. When he received the prestigious Maria Moors Cabot award from Columbia University in 1981, past recipients returned theirs in protest.

"He didn't really care about being well-liked," said Jorge Abrasha Rottenberg, a longtime friend who worked with Timerman in his first publications, after his death. "He just wanted to be true to his concepts and ideas. Deep down, he was an agitator."

One of Argentina's darkest chapters, the military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983, changed Timerman's life.

At a time when the press was heavily censored, Timerman's newspaper, *La Opinion*, published the unpublishable: the regime's terror campaign against suspected leftist activists and sympathizers, students and intellectuals, actors and journalists, union leaders and ordinary people. He also used *La Opinion* to rail against state-supported anti-Semitism.

In April, 1977 *La Opinion* was taken over by the military and Timerman was detained. He was then tortured for being a Jew and interrogated about an alleged Zionist plot. An estimated 30,000 people were kidnapped and disappeared during Argentina's so-called "dirty war," according to human rights organizations. Timerman became one of Argentina's most prominent political prisoners, capturing international attention.

He returned to Argentina after a democratically elected

government replaced the military dictatorship in 1983. He testified against his tormentors and earned compensation for his newspapers, which the government had taken over.

He wife, Risha Midlin, whom he met in a Zionist group, is described as a sweet woman who countered his stubbornness. She played a big role in making Timerman's detention public. □

Israel's treatment at the U.N. verges on racism, U.S. envoy says*By Julia Goldman*

NEW YORK (JTA) — America's ambassador to the United Nations says Israel's treatment at the world body amounts to racism.

"The only way to explain the consistent discrimination toward Israel," Richard Holbrooke said last week, is a "deep, subliminal, but undeniable hostility that verges on — and I apologize, but I cannot find a better word — racism."

He condemned the U.N. General Assembly's resolution of Nov. 10, 1975, that equated Zionism with racism and the "perennial passage" of resolutions condemning Israel that do "nothing to enhance" the peace process. Such treatment results, Holbrooke said, of the world body catering to "the prerogatives of a minority of states" and runs counter to the U.N. charter, which is based on the principle of the "sovereign equality of all its members."

It is time for the member-states of the United Nations to normalize relations with the Middle East's "only true democracy" and to facilitate Israel's entry into one of five influential regional groups, Holbrooke said at an American Israel Public Affairs Council regional dinner in New York.

Israel is the only member-state excluded from such a group, which is a prerequisite for participation in important committees, including the Security Council. The "anomaly" of Israel's exclusion could be resolved "in the not-too-distant future," said Holbrooke, who has joined Israel and American Jewish groups in making the issue a priority of their U.N. agendas.

"We ask, in fact, we plead with our friends" in the Western European and Others Group, he said, "to open its doors to Israel, at least on a temporary basis."

Israel is now campaigning for entry into the group.

Such a move would serve as an "encouragement to the Barak government and the peace process." Then Israel can take its "rightful place" in the Asia group, Holbrooke said.

Israel's potential membership in WEOG is part of current discussions at a series of European Union meetings, but the outcome is far from clear. Consensus among the members of the group — which includes Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand — is necessary for Israel to join it.

European countries raising objections to Israel's membership have cited a resistance to more competition among group members for influential posts, as well as fears of harming the peace process.

Israel's membership in the group "would give a signal" that Israel's integration in the Middle East is "not particularly healthy," said a U.N. spokesperson for one of the countries seen as most opposed to the move. Israel's appeal raises several important questions, the source said. Among them is whether the Asia group — which includes Iran — would ever admit Israel, even in an environment of Middle East peace. □