



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 6

Tuesday, January 11, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Talks take a week's break

Israeli-Syrian talks will take a break until next week, the State Department said.

Monday's announcement, which did not specify where the next round of negotiations would be held, came as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa held their last day of talks in Shepherdstown, W.Va., before heading home. [Page 3]

Protesters want Iran 13 released

Protesters demanding the release of 13 Iranian Jews arrested last year for spying for Israel demonstrated near the residence of British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The protest came as Blair was meeting in London with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi.

Rally opposes Golan pullback

More than 100,000 Israelis opposed to any future withdrawal from the Golan Heights rallied Monday night in Tel Aviv, according to police estimates of the crowd.

During the demonstration, loudspeakers played recordings of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, assassinated in the same square where the protesters gathered, stressing the strategic importance of the Golan. [Page 3]

Israel rejects refugees' return

Israel rejected a Palestinian demand that the Jewish state permit the return of millions of Palestinian refugees and compensate them for their lost property and suffering.

The exchange took place Monday during the latest round of final-status talks, held in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Egypt to take part in talks

Egyptian officials said they will participate when multilateral talks on Middle East issues resume Feb. 1 in Moscow.

They said they are willing to join the discussions, which focus on arms control, economic cooperation, the environment, refugees and water shortages, because of the resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations and recent progress in Israel's talks with the Palestinian Authority.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

From the displaced persons files: A parachute forms a wedding dress

By Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — Lily Friedman wanted to wear a white gown at her wedding in 1946, but there was one problem: There weren't any gowns available at her displaced persons camp.

Her fiance, a cook at the Celle camp in Germany, solved the problem. He traded two pounds of coffee to a German pilot for a large, off-white parachute.

A seamstress who was one of Friedman's friends made a dress out of the parachute, and with extra material, made a shirt for the groom as well.

With the help of a suit borrowed from a British major, the couple's outfits were complete.

On Jan. 27, 1946, they were married in a makeshift synagogue near the camp in front of more than 400 guests, most of them survivors.

"That was the first occasion where people danced and were happy," remembers Friedman, who now lives in Brooklyn.

Despite all the information available about the Holocaust, relatively little is known about the roughly 90 displaced persons camps that housed some 250,000 Jews between 1945 and 1951, when all but one of the camps closed.

"I can't tell you how many people have come by and said I didn't know anything about this history," Steven Luckert, curator of the permanent exhibition at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, says, talking about an exhibit about D.P. camps, "Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons, 1945-1951," currently on display at the Washington museum.

Part of the reason for this, says Menachem Rosensaft, who was born in the Bergen-Belsen D.P. camp in 1948, is that the Jewish experience in the camps — in which individuals barely removed from their horrific wartime experiences demonstrated a remarkable vibrancy — don't fit victimization stereotypes.

People have two images of survivors — wearing concentration camp uniforms staring off into the distance on liberation day and as grey-haired people lighting candles at Holocaust commemorations — says Rosensaft, who is one of the organizers of a conference on the D.P. camps scheduled to be held in Washington beginning Friday.

A desire to erase this ignorance motivated the museum's Second Generation Advisory Project to push for the exhibit and conference.

Exhibits on the topic are also being shown at other museums and institutions in the Washington area, including the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Museum and the National Museum of American Jewish Military History.

Friedman wasn't the only bride in the camps.

By 1947, the 90 camps that housed Jews in Germany, Austria and Italy had one of the highest marriage and birth rates in the world.

"You needed to form these bonds because you had nobody," says Regina Speigel, who married her husband, Sam, in the Fohrenwald camp in Germany. "People can't live by themselves."

The surviving remnant of European Jewry, or she'erit hapletah, as it is called, quickly began to rebuild a semblance of normalcy.

The United Nations, the American and British governments, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ran the camps.

But "just days or weeks after their liberation, Jews began to organize," Luckert

MIDEAST FOCUS

Weizman says he won't resign

Israeli President Ezer Weizman denied reports he intends to resign in the wake of the disclosure that he received nearly \$500,000 from a French millionaire friend.

Weizman told Israel Radio on Monday he was awaiting the conclusions of a probe by State Attorney Edna Arbel.

Weizman has not denied receiving money from French businessman Edouard Seroussi, but has said he did nothing illegal.

Rabbis ban Internet use

Rabbinical leaders of several fervently Orthodox groups in Israel recently banned their followers from using the Internet.

The rabbis cited the access to pornography on the Internet as the reason for the ban, which has been spread throughout the community.

Israel may reduce army service

Israel is reportedly planning to cut the mandatory service for male soldiers from three years to two-and-a-half years if Israel signs a peace accord with Syria and pulls its troops out of southern Lebanon.

Once those conditions are met, the change would take effect in the summer of 2001.

Soldier injured in Lebanon

An Israeli soldier was lightly injured by a roadside bomb near Israel's northern border.

The bomb detonated Sunday as a bus traveling to pick up the soldier from an outpost passed by.

South Korea to buy planes

South Korean officials said they plan to buy 100 Israeli-made pilotless planes this year. The \$52 million deal is part of South Korea's program to beef up its defense against Communist North Korea, the officials added Monday.



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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says. In other words, the survivors did more than just survive.

Teetering, as one of them said, "between hope and depression," they coped with their situation by recreating the life and communal structure they had known before the Holocaust.

They cobbled together an impressive array of religious institutions and schools, political organizations and sports clubs, and theater troupes and newspapers.

Rena Berliner, who survived the war in Poland, became part of a singing troupe that toured camps, performing such operas as "Aida" and "Carmen" translated into Yiddish. The purpose, she says, was "bringing a little culture to people who never had any."

With the help of training sessions organized by the JDC and ORT, the vocational and educational organization, camp residents learned job skills such as sewing.

An overwhelming number of people initially wanted to immigrate to Palestine, but the British restrictions on immigration there, coupled with reports about the tough life in the Middle East, dampened enthusiasm.

"I had a cousin who immigrated to Palestine, and he made no secret that if you wanted to be doctor, forget coming to Palestine," says Dr. Edmond Goldenberg, who eventually immigrated to the United States.

Still, in the end, 142,000 of the camp residents moved to prestate Palestine or Israel, according to Rosensaft, a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

At least 75,000 moved to the United States after legislation in 1948 opened up slots to displaced persons, and about 16,000 went to Canada, he says.

Jews weren't the only ones housed as displaced persons after the war. Britain and the United States also set up camps for other war refugees.

In initially organizing the camps, the U.S. and British governments, hesitant to use the same racial classifications as the Nazis, housed all displaced persons, including Jews, by their country of origin.

As a result, Jews occasionally lived in the same camps as refugees who had collaborated with the Nazis.

This changed after August 1945, when the United States issued a report indicting the conditions in the camps.

The so-called Harrison report referred to the camps as "concentration camps" in which some wore striped pajamas similar to the Nazi camp uniforms and lived mostly on bread and coffee.

The report made two recommendations adopted by President Truman, the most important of which was that Jews should be segregated in their own camps, because "this was done for so long by the Nazis that a group has been created that has special needs."

But even after Jews were spared the indignity of living alongside their former tormenters, some still retained an understandable fear of the Christian world, in particular the Germans.

"Initially, we hated everyone that spoke German," says Goldenberg, who used his prewar medical training working in a clinic in the Ebensee camp in Austria.

Even after the initial feelings subsided, some patients refused to see German specialists in nearby towns, he says.

But not everyone shared this antipathy.

Less than two years after she was liberated in 1944, Berliner began studying voice for free at a conservatory near Munich, where most of the students were German.

They were "friendly and outgoing," Berliner says, but "I didn't form any friendships with them."

The camps were difficult for people because even though Jews were no longer subject to the Nazi atrocities, they were still highly regimented.

"You can do this, you can't do that. You depend on them to give you ration cards to get food. You resent it," says Spiegel.

For Lily Friedman, the camps provided an opportunity for something that, more than 50 years later, she describes as "magical."

After her wedding, she loaned her gown to her sister and other would-be brides — and it eventually took part in more than 17 marriage ceremonies.

"It was a miracle that we wanted to go on with life." □

JEWISH WORLD

Australia won't prosecute Kalejs

Australia said it would not reopen an investigation of an alleged Nazi war criminal.

The country needs strong new evidence against Konrad Kalejs to insure that he would be convicted if tried, Justice Minister Amanda Vanstone said Monday. Kalejs, accused of participating in the killings of thousands of Jews in Latvia during World War II, went into hiding after arriving in Australia last Friday from Britain.

Holocaust tops 'worst' list

The Holocaust defeated a 1917 British document that favored the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine as the worst idea of the millennium, according to an Internet poll.

The Holocaust's overwhelming victory in the MSNBC.com poll came after the Balfour Declaration had jumped to an early lead. "It's important to keep in mind that the Worst Ideas of the Millennium was intended to be a light-hearted survey," said the editor in chief of MSNBC, Merrill Brown.

Uzbek Jews vote for incumbent

Jews in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan overwhelmingly supported the re-election of incumbent President Islam Karimov, according to sources in the capital of Tashkent.

Karimov has maintained friendly relations with the local Jewish community. Prior to the vote, the Sephardi synagogue in Tashkent offered prayers for his victory.

N.Y. center causes trouble

A new cultural center designed to draw in New York's unaffiliated young adult Jews reportedly is having trouble getting along with its Upper West Side neighbors.

Residents near this venue for concerts, classes and movie screenings complain of loud concerts and people milling around outside, say officials with the local community board. An article in Sunday's New York Times quoted one neighbor as saying, "This isn't nice Jewish singles. It's club kids drinking, fighting and smoking pot on the street after midnight."

Makor representatives told JTA that the center is revamping security to ensure that visitors leave the building quietly.

Disgraced SS officer dies

A German university official who admitted in 1995 that he had been a Nazi SS officer died at the age of 90. Hans Schwerte, who as Hans-Ernst Schneider served on the personal staff of SS chief Heinrich Himmler, was stripped of his title of professor and other honors after his wartime activities were revealed.

Israel and Syria take a break as Clinton acknowledges 'tension'

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The latest round of Israeli-Syrian negotiations has come to an inconclusive end, with no indication that the two sides bridged any of their differences.

But in a hopeful indication of the two nations' willingness to continue the process, the U.S. State Department announced Monday that the talks would resume Jan. 19 at an as-yet-unspecified location in the United States.

U.S. officials, who served as mediators in the talks, were careful to dispel any disappointment that no breakthroughs had been achieved.

President Clinton, who visited Shepherdstown, W.Va., five times during the weeklong round of talks there, likewise cautioned against expecting too much too soon, given the dimensions of the issues facing the negotiators.

This is a "time of great tension, where all people will have to search for wisdom and understanding," he said before Monday's recess in the talks.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa left the tranquil setting to face reactions at home.

Underscoring the political tensions in Israel, more than 100,000 Israelis opposed to any future withdrawal from the Golan Heights rallied Monday night in Tel Aviv, according to police estimates of the crowd.

During the demonstration, loudspeakers played recordings of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, assassinated in the same square where the protesters gathered, stressing the strategic importance of the Golan.

In an indication of the difficulties facing Barak, who has vowed to submit any agreement reached with Damascus to a popular referendum, a member of his own Cabinet was sitting on the stage during the demonstration — Interior Minister Natan Sharansky.

Sharansky's Russian immigrant following is expected to provide a nucleus of opposition to any Golan-for-peace deal with Syria, which is one of Damascus' key demands.

Foreign Minister David Levy, who returned to Israel on Monday from the talks, said the two sides "did not even get close" to reaching agreement regarding the Golan or any of the other issues facing them.

Levy said the Syrian delegation was holding firm to its demand that the Jewish state withdraw from the Golan Heights to the border that existed on the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War.

Acceding to this demand would give Damascus control of the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

"This is unacceptable to us," Levy said.

When the talks began Jan. 3, the two sides were unable to agree on which issues to tackle first.

The Syrians had wanted to discuss the return of the Golan, while Israel first wanted to focus on security issues and the normalization of ties between the two countries, which are still technically in a state of war.

As a result of American mediation, Israel's position prevailed. The two sides also created working committees to deal with the four broad issues confronting them: borders, water, normalization and security.

After the committees failed to make progress, Clinton last Friday presented Barak and Sharaa with a "working paper" that set forth an agenda and a focus for future discussions.

Clinton's repeated interventions over the past week, while helping to keep the negotiations from faltering, drew fire from right-wing politicians in Israel, who accused Clinton of trying to force Barak to make concessions to the Syrians.

The Shepherdstown talks were the second set of face-to-face meetings involving Barak and Sharaa.

Last December, Clinton hosted the two at the White House, ending a nearly four-year suspension of Israeli-Syrian negotiations. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**German Jewry's new leader bridges the past and the future***By Toby Axelrod*

BERLIN (JTA) — German Jewry is entering a new era of leadership at a critical juncture for the community.

Five months after the death of Ignatz Bubis, the Central Council of Jews in Germany has elected a Dusseldorf theatrical agent, Paul Spiegel, as its new president.

Sunday's election of the 62-year-old by the nine-member council is seen as a bridge between the aging generation of Holocaust survivors and the younger generation of German Jews who, to a great extent, want to put the past behind them.

But his election also signifies a reluctance by Jewish leaders here to pass the leadership baton to the post-Holocaust generation.

Bubis, who had been a major public figure in Germany since serving as president from 1992 until his death in August, had reportedly wanted Spiegel, who was vice president, to succeed him as the head of the group that oversees religious, communal and financial matters for Germany's 80,000-member Jewish community.

Spiegel, the head of Dusseldorf's Jewish community since 1984, was chosen by a 6-3 vote over Charlotte Knobloch, 67, head of Munich's Jewish community since 1985. Like Knobloch, Spiegel survived the Holocaust as a hidden child.

Attesting to the importance of the Jewish community in Germany, some 100 reporters attended a news conference Spiegel held Sunday upon his election.

At the news conference, Spiegel said his top priority would be the integration of the 50,000 Jewish emigres from the former Soviet Union who have come here during the past 10 years.

As a result of their influx, Germany has Europe's fastest-growing Jewish community.

They need financial and spiritual sustenance, Spiegel said, adding, "They know they are Jews, but they don't know what Judaism is."

Spiegel told reporters he hopes to heal the rifts between observant and liberal Jews in Germany.

He also said he will attempt to bring German Jews and non-Jews closer together — a task that Bubis, in an interview shortly before his death, said he had failed to accomplish.

At the news conference, Spiegel said the normalization of relations between German Jews and non-Jews "has yet to happen," but that he is hopeful that it will. At the same time, he added, "the situation has improved, and the fact that Jews are saying they want to live in Germany is not a bad sign for us."

Spiegel said that unlike Bubis, he was "relatively optimistic" about the future of the Jewish community in Germany, despite an increase in xenophobia in recent years.

He expressed concern about the effect of "extreme right-wing and anti-Semitic poison" freely available on the Internet.

On the other hand, he applauded youth exchange programs between Germany and Israel and said the interest of young Germans in learning about Judaism and the Holocaust has "never been as great as it is today."

Spiegel told reporters he would try to live up to Bubis' ideals, but that he would find his "own style" — including delegating

tasks to other council members.

At the same news conference, Knobloch accepted her defeat but said she believed her sex had put her at a disadvantage.

"As a woman, I didn't stand the same chance as a man," she said.

Spiegel's family comes from the village of Warendorf in the state of Westphalia.

During World War II, he was hidden, along with his mother, Ruth, by Belgian farmers. His father, Hugo, and his older sister, Rosa, were discovered and deported by the Nazis. Rosa never returned. Spiegel's father survived Buchenwald and Auschwitz and was liberated from Dachau.

In a recent interview, Spiegel recalled how during the war years "people had told me that Germans were giants who killed little children."

After the war, the family was reunited in Warendorf and decided to stay in Germany. Spiegel's father renovated the town's tiny Jewish chapel and led the first services there.

He has been described politically as a centrist. He is also said to have close contacts with German President Johannes Rau.

As a result of the vote, Knobloch and council member Michel Friedman of Frankfurt will serve as vice presidents of the council. Friedman, whose parents survived the Holocaust, declined to run for the office, saying Bubis' successor should be a survivor. □

Shepherdstown produces tale of new lover for legendary figure*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli researcher has cast doubt on the claim of a Jewish family living near Shepherdstown, W.Va., that one of its forebears was a lover of Joseph Trumpeldor, a legendary figure in Israel's prestate history.

Journalists covering the Israeli-Syrian negotiations in West Virginia this week digressed briefly from the diplomatic developments to relate the tale of Yetta Rappelsky, who, according to her relatives, had been betrothed to Trumpeldor.

"From my family, I know that Yetta was engaged to marry Trumpeldor. She was on her way to meet him in Palestine, but I guess she received the news that he was killed in a skirmish with the Arabs in Palestine, and she was terribly upset and she attempted to end her life," Yetta's sister, Anita Roberts, 84, said in remarks broadcast on Israel Radio.

"She jumped from a sixth-story window. She hoped to die, but she did not die, she became a cripple," Roberts said.

But her story was met with skepticism by Shulamit Laskov, the author of a biography about Trumpeldor, who during World War I worked to create Jewish fighting units that would liberate Palestine from Ottoman rule.

After his shooting death in 1920 by armed Arabs, he became a symbol of the pioneer movement and of the armed defense of the Jewish homeland.

"I hate to dispel such a story because it is so romantic and dramatic, but I do not believe its credibility," Laskov told Israel Radio.

Laskov added that while Trumpeldor has been linked with several women, she had never come across Yetta Rappelsky's name in her research. □