



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 9

Friday, January 14, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. negotiating paper leaked

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is reportedly seeking Syrian agreement to allow Israeli residents of the Golan Heights to continue living there if a peace treaty is reached and the area transferred to Syrian sovereignty.

Barak's position is spelled out in a U.S. document setting out the two sides' positions that was published by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. [Page 3]

Clinton, Assad confer by phone

President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad conferred by telephone on the status of Israeli-Syrian peace talks, according to a Clinton aide.

The call focused on how to make progress in the negotiations, according to White House deputy press secretary Jake Siewert.

Report focuses on Russian Jews

A new study on New York's approximately 400,000 Russian Jews reports that the immigrants are rapidly adjusting to American life and are increasingly likely to be employed, satisfied with life and strongly identified as Jews.

The study, conducted by a group of immigrant sociologists and the American Jewish Committee, reports that 82 percent of working-age Russian Jews who have been in the United States at least nine years are employed. It also found that 67 percent of Russian Jews believe their Jewish identity is important, and that the majority vote as Democrats or independents.

Miles Lerman plans to resign

The chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council informed President Clinton that he intends to resign as soon as a successor is appointed.

After more than two decades of involvement in creation and development of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Miles Lerman told Clinton on Wednesday, "I am proud that I have accomplished all of my original goals." [Page 4]

REMINDER: Because of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 17.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

American Jews grapple with shifting reality concerning Syria

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In 1993, American Jews slowly came to accept the reality that Israel was making peace with Yasser Arafat and his Palestine Liberation Organization, which was long thought of as Israel's enemy No. 1.

Now, nearly seven years later, they are grappling with another major shift as Israel negotiates a deal with Syria.

For more than 30 years, American Jews have been repeatedly told by Israeli politicians and generals that the Golan Heights could not be handed over to Syria without endangering the Jewish state's security. But that mantra is changing as Israel has entered the highest-level talks it has ever held with Syria. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has said the framework of a peace deal — including the withdrawal from a substantial chunk of the Golan — could be reached within two months.

Faced with intense opposition at home, Barak also has his work cut out for him garnering support among American Jews. That support could prove critical if any deal becomes dependent — as it most likely will — on billions of dollars of U.S. funding.

Poll numbers show that until now, American Jews have overwhelmingly opposed an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan as part of a deal with Syria.

In the American Jewish Committee's 1999 survey of American Jewish opinion — released prior to Barak's election and while no public talks with Syria were occurring — nearly 40 percent said Israel should not give up any of the Golan; 32 percent said only a small part of it should be given up; and 23 percent said some of the land should be given to Syria. Only 4 percent said most of it should be given up, while a minuscule 2 percent said all of it should be surrendered.

But those numbers do not necessarily predict future views.

The American Jewish community "on this issue takes its cues directly from the Israeli government," David Singer, the AJCommittee's director of research, said, adding that the 1999 survey "tells you nothing about what American Jews will do if there is a peace agreement." Despite past — and current — opposition to giving up the Golan among many American Jews and Israelis, some observers believe that such a move would still not be as shocking as Yitzhak Rabin's first halting handshake with Arafat on the White House lawn in September 1993.

Asserting there is "an adjustment" going on in with regard to the Golan Height, Martin Raffel, associate executive vice chairman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said, "I think Israelis and American Jews found the development of the Oslo accords more stinging" than any decision to relinquish a part or the entire Golan.

Raffel, whose group is the umbrella for local Jewish community relations councils, said he has found from discussions with people around the country that there has been a "gradual accommodation" to the reality, because talks with Syria have been held under the last four prime ministers of Israel, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the Likud Party, who held secret contacts with Syria through cosmetics heir Ronald Lauder, now the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"People recognize the importance of the negotiations and accept the reality of it," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, who issued a statement along with Lauder welcoming the beginning of talks in December.

Although people still clearly have concerns about an Israeli withdrawal from the

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hezbollah may cease attacks

Hezbollah's leader is hinting the group might end its attacks on Israel if peace accords are reached among Israel, Syria and Lebanon. The remarks were made in a television interview in Beirut by Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, and parts of it were broadcast on Israel Television.

Nasrallah also said that Ron Arad, an Israeli airman whose plane was shot down over Lebanon in 1986, might still be alive and that the group was attempting to determine his fate.

Meanwhile, Israel freed 27 prisoners held in Lebanon, including at least two members of Hezbollah. The releases may be part of a prisoner exchange, and have also been linked to Hezbollah's promise to determine Arad's fate.

Senators, in Israel, eye funding

The chairman of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee indicated he would be willing to work with the Clinton administration to fund an Israeli-Syrian peace deal.

Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) was among a group of U.S. senators visiting Israel as speculation continued over the cost of peace between Israel and Syria. The delegation toured the Golan Heights and met with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Morocco's king plans Israel visit

Morocco's king agreed to visit Israel, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy made the announcement after meeting with King Mohammed in Rabat.

U.S. flag flown for Israeli envoy

The American flag was flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of departing Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval for his years of service to the Jewish state. Shoval will leave his post Saturday and will be replaced by Israel's new ambassador, David Ivry.

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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Golan, Hoenlein said, he has not seen the "extremist statements or rhetoric" that were heard back in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo accords.

Matthew Dorf, director of government and public affairs for the American Jewish Congress, summed up the view of many when he said, "If there is an agreement, I don't think you are going to find too many people cheering that Israel is giving back the Golan. But what they will be cheering is peace on Israel's northern border."

Still, despite Barak's military background and his pledge not to endanger Israel's security, some American Jews remain suspicious.

Rabbi Pesach Lerner, executive vice president of the National Council of Young Israel, asked: "Why, Mr. Barak, are you changing after 30 years?"

"I'm not ready to accept that he has such a master plan that everything fits in," he said of Barak's negotiating strategy.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, predicted that Barak will have a hard time generating support in the United States because the majority of Israelis at this point, according to polls, oppose giving up the Golan.

"Barak will have a difficult time convincing American Jews to lobby against the wishes of the clear majority of the Israeli people who do not want to surrender the Golan Heights," said Klein, who added that his group has already met with members of Congress, urging them not to give any aid to Syria if there is a deal.

Klein said his group also plans to take out newspaper ads next week, when the talks are scheduled to resume. The ads liken Syrian President Hafez Assad to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, a pariah in the eyes of Israel and the United States.

Both Jewish opponents and supporters of the talks are galvanizing their forces because they recognize that the political and economic backing of the administration and Congress will be key to an Israeli-Syrian agreement.

"The political struggle in Washington will be ferocious because we will soon reach the hour of destiny," said Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, executive director of ARZA/World Union, North America.

With that struggle in mind, Hirsch and other American Reform leaders have launched a campaign to demonstrate to the Israeli government and public that the "vast majority" of American Jews are throwing their support behind the current talks.

On Monday, more than 200 Reform rabbis and activists met with Israeli diplomats at the Israeli Embassy in Washington and all of the Jewish state's consulates around the country. They delivered an open letter to Barak saying that the protest by an estimated 120 people during the talks in Shepherdstown, W.Va., "reflects only a small minority of American Jews and that the vast majority of American Jews strongly support your efforts to forge a peace accord with Syria."

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, also said it was important for supporters of the peace process not to remain silent at a time when opponents have an easy time criticizing an agreement that does not exist.

"It is incumbent on the center to, at the very least, deliver a message which says that we are a community supporting the prime minister in his leading Israel down the road to a secure peace with Syria," he said, adding that his own group is still mulling over how to voice its support for the talks.

Although some American Jews are clearly putting their faith in Barak, others say a campaign to educate Jewish — and non-Jewish — Americans will be essential.

Dorf of the AJCongress said his group is planning an educational forum for early February in Washington to explain the reasons why Barak and his negotiating team, believe the time is ripe to reach a peace deal with Syria.

For its part, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby, is chatting up Capitol Hill staffers and journalists in an effort to explain Barak's belief that Israel can withdraw from the Golan Heights while strengthening Israel's security, and how the move would help U.S. strategic interests in the region.

AIPAC, which is preparing for a tough battle to secure billions in aid for Israel to support a deal, also put out a fact sheet with the clear message that war is costlier than peace. Hoenlein said the Conference of Presidents has so far signed up 90 people from for a trip to Israel in February, which will include a tour of the Golan.

It will be important, he said, to provide people with information in order to "to keep the community together" when the action shifts to Congress. □

JEWISH WORLD

AJCommittee gets hate mail

The FBI is investigating hate mail received by American Jewish Committee offices around the United States as well as by civil rights groups and black colleges.

Saying there never was a Holocaust, the letter received by 17 of the 32 AJCommittee offices said, "And if there was, Hitler didn't do a very good job."

Looted works may be in museum

Some 70 artworks at an Austrian museum may have been looted by the Nazis from their Jewish owners, a museum official said Wednesday.

Citing the results of a year of research, the official at Vienna's Joanneum Museum said Wednesday the works include paintings and drawings by Rodin and Klimt.

He estimated the works' total worth at between \$400,000 and \$800,000.

Missile parts bound for Libya

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook expressed "deep concern" this week after 32 crates containing parts for Scud missiles that were bound for Libya were recently discovered in transit at London's Gatwick Airport.

The missiles, once assembled, would have been capable of carrying chemical or biological warheads.

The parts would have extended the range of the missiles, enabling Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi to target a number of Western European capitals.

Info sought on Wallenberg

A Jewish group is calling on the U.S. government to pressure Russia to help resolve the mystery of Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance.

The American Jewish Committee, which has published a booklet about the wartime Swedish diplomat, said U.S. officials should "seek the cooperation of acting Russian President Putin to fully open the Soviet-era archives and reveal the truth."

Wallenberg saved thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Nazis.

He was last seen being arrested by the Russians on Jan. 17, 1945.

Jewish leader in Belarus to sue

A leader of the Jewish community in the former Soviet republic of Belarus is planning to sue the publishing house Orthodox Initiative for "fomenting ethnic hatred," according to Radio Free Europe.

Leonid Levin launched the suit after the publisher recently put out "The War According to the Laws of Meanness," which consists of anti-Semitic articles published in the Russian and Belarusian press in the 1990s as well as in pre-1917 Russia.

Israel wants Golan residents to stay if Syria takes over, leaked paper says

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel wants Syria to allow Jewish residents of the Golan Heights to remain there in the event of an Israeli troop withdrawal from the region, according to a U.S. document published by an Israeli newspaper.

The Israeli position is spelled out in the document, which U.S. mediators reportedly gave both negotiating teams before the talks at Shepherdstown, W.Va., recessed earlier this week. The document, published Thursday by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, indicates that Israel wants to create arrangements on the Golan "concerning the Israelis and Israeli communities from which Israeli forces will be relocated."

In Washington, State Department spokesman James Rubin said at a briefing Thursday that he was "shocked — shocked — that there are leaks in the Middle East peace process." The leaking of the document was "particularly unhelpful" for the "confidentiality of the negotiations," he added. Rubin also cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from the document because it "has no official or legal status."

The document is a "work in progress, and it will change as we receive comments and clarifications from both sides. And so I would caution you against assuming that any particular version is definitive at that particular time," Rubin said.

During the briefing, Rubin also confirmed that President Clinton had conferred Thursday by telephone with Syrian President Hafez Assad on the status of the talks.

But he would not go into details about the call except to say it focused on how to make progress in the negotiations.

In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Ehud Barak's office confirmed that the document published by Ha'aretz had been distributed to the two sides, but, like Rubin, cautioned that it was "preliminary" and had "no binding force."

Some observers believe the government leaked the document in order to boost support among Israelis — and among residents of the Golan in particular — for an eventual peace agreement with Damascus.

Golan residents leader Yehuda Wohlman was quoted Thursday as saying that thousands of Israelis living in the area are willing to remain there under Syrian rule.

But not all Golan residents feel this way.

"We live in a democracy — no reason why anyone would want to live under Syrian dictatorship. I don't want to walk out of my door and see a Syrian soldier standing there," Golan spokeswoman Marla Van Meter told Reuters.

The document indicated that the two sides remain divided over borders, with Syria adhering to its demand for a full Golan withdrawal to the border that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War; Israel just as adamantly insisted that it would discuss a withdrawal only after the talks focused on the "security and other vital interests of the parties."

This bolstered Barak's claim from earlier in the week, when he refuted claims that he had already offered to turn over a large portion of the Golan.

The two sides also differed about a monitoring station on Mt. Hermon, with Israel demanding an "effective Israeli presence" there, and Syria saying it wants the station operated by the United States and France. The document did indicate that the two sides had reached some important areas of agreement:

- **Peaceful relations.** The two sides agreed to establish "full diplomatic and consular relations, including the exchange of resident ambassadors." They also agreed to open borders "enabling the free and unimpeded flow of people, goods and services between the two countries."

- **Water.** They agreed to "cooperate on water-related matters," though some differences still remain. Israel wants a "supervision and enforcement mechanism" to ensure its continued quantity of water use from the Sea of Galilee. Syria wants to reach "mutually agreeable arrangements with respect to water quantities."

- **Hostile alliances.** They agreed to refrain from "cooperating with a third party in a hostile alliance of a military character and will ensure that territory under its control is not used by any military forces of a third party." Israel sees the term "under its control" as referring to Lebanon and considers this a Syrian commitment to reign in Hezbollah. □

Holocaust museum's driving force to resign in favor of 'young blood'

By Michael Shapiro

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is stepping down five months after he was criticized in an independent report ordered by Congress.

Miles Lerman has served as chairman for the past six years and has been a driving force behind the museum's creation since 1978, when he was appointed by President Carter to a precursor of the council. Lerman informed President Clinton of his decision during one of their regularly scheduled meetings.

Lerman, in an interview, said he would stay on as chairman until the president selects his successor from one of the council's 55 members. He also said he will remain on the council. "This museum is my life," he said.

Lerman, who was born in Poland, was captured by the Nazis and imprisoned in a slave labor camp. In 1942, he escaped and formed a resistance group that spent the next two years fighting the Nazis in the forests of southeastern Poland. During the interview, Lerman, who is nearly 80, excitedly listed what he describes as the museum's "fabulous accomplishments."

Since the museum opened its doors six and a half years ago, nearly 14 million people have visited it — 80 percent have been non-Jews and 4 million have been children who are educated about the Holocaust by 30,000 teachers from across the country.

"This museum is more than just a museum," Lerman said. "We are a moral platform."

Despite the museum's success, there also have been a number of well-publicized controversies during Lerman's tenure that have tarnished the institution's reputation.

The independent report, ordered by Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio), who chairs a subcommittee that approves federal money for the museum, came in the wake of one those controversies: the on-again, off-again invitation to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to tour the museum.

The study, conducted by an outside panel of administrative experts, concluded that the institution has been stifled by "excessive involvement" of the museum's governing council in day-to-day operations and specifically criticized what it called Lerman's tendency to "act unilaterally," suggesting that he and others let go of the reins and allow the director to assume greater responsibilities.

It said power was concentrated within a small group of council members and criticized the institution for what it called its "weak committee system, inadequate discipline, and a lack of professionalism." The study recommended that the legislation governing the museum be changed to strengthen its administration, scale back the role of the council and give the director of the museum more of the powers of a chief executive officer.

Regula, in an interview from his home in Ohio, praised Lerman's service. "Everyone owes him a great debt of gratitude for the service he has given," he said, adding that "without him there wouldn't be a museum."

In statements provided by the museum, several of the institution's officials and members of the council also praised Lerman's efforts.

Lerman said the report, issued by the National Academy of

Public Administration, a nonprofit organization chartered by Congress to make federal, state and local governments more effective, did not play into his decision to step down.

Lerman said he appointed a commission earlier last year, before the NAPA report came out, to prepare its own recommendations for changes in management and governance.

In December, the council approved the recommendation, which also take into account some suggestions made by the NAPA report.

One of the recommendations was to bring in "young blood," Lerman said. "A leader who preaches certain concepts to others and does not apply these concepts to himself is not a serious leader," he said. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Zionists who stay in Russia seek acceptance from WZO

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Russian Zionist movement has taken a step toward becoming a permanent force in Russian Jewish life — and not one solely dedicated to encouraging Jews to make aliyah.

At a recent meeting here, several dozen delegates from throughout Russia gathered at a hotel to form an umbrella group called the Zionist Federation of Russia.

"The Zionist movement shouldn't be reduced to emigration to Israel," said Katya Veselova, director of Jewish radio in Moscow, who was one of the group's founders.

"The movement has to be legalized and should have official opportunities to lobby for the interests of Israel at the highest political level, to officially collect money for Israel."

In recent years, Russian Jewish life has developed three main branches: religious, communal and Zionist.

The religious and communal branches of the Russian Jewish movement quickly gained international recognition and their umbrella organizations were integrated into international organizations such as the World Jewish Congress. But the Zionist movement ran into problems integrating into the World Zionist Organization, the world body representing Zionist institutions.

The modern Russian Zionist movement officially came into existence in 1989, and by 1992, was officially registered with the Russian Ministry of Justice.

But officials with the WZO, then headed by Simcha Dinitz, didn't want to accept a Russian organization into the group because they believed Russian Jews as a community would disappear with mass immigration to Israel.

Even as it became clear that despite continued high numbers of emigration, hundreds of thousands of Jews would remain in Russia, the attitude of Zionist officials changed slowly — in part because under WZO regulations, the Zionist Federation of Russia would become the sole agent in Russia of the WZO and of the Jewish Agency for Israel and would have a say in how emigration and other projects are funded.

Currently, the Jewish Agency has its own operations in Russia. Conservative and Reform Judaism are also represented in the federation, which hopes to be accepted into the WZO as a full member at the next World Zionist Congress in 2002. □