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83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. trying to keep talks afloat

President Clinton talked by phone to Syrian President Hafez Assad about the postponed Israeli-Syrian peace talks. White House spokesman Joe Lockhart declined to comment on whether Clinton had urged Assad to show some flexibility on the issue of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Syria demanded Tuesday a written Israeli commitment to a full withdrawal from the Golan as a precondition for resuming the negotiations.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright downplayed the postponement. [Page 4]

Barak, Arafat hold surprise parley

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak met Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in central Israel late Monday night to discuss reaching a framework for a final peace accord by mid-February.

Both sides denied reports they were planning to extend the February deadline due to the slow pace of the final-status talks. [Page 4]

New envoy presents credentials

Israel's new ambassador to the United States presented his credentials Tuesday to the State Department so he could begin his duties.

David Ivry will formally present his credentials to President Clinton at a later date.

Bradley defends Sharpton forum

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley defended a recent public meeting with the Rev. Al Sharpton, a New York activist who has been accused of anti-Semitism. "I don't agree with Al Sharpton on everything," Bradley said Monday during an Iowa forum with opponent Vice President Al Gore. "But I think that he's got to be given respect, and people have to be allowed to grow."

Berlin mayor avoiding ceremony

Berlin's mayor is refusing to attend a ceremony for a national Holocaust memorial in the German capital. Eberhard Diepgen has long opposed the memorial, but a spokesman said he declined the invitation because of a scheduling conflict.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is slated to attend the Jan. 27 ceremony, which coincides with Germany's Day of Remembrance for Holocaust victims.

Study touts Russian success, but some question its rosy view

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — "A century ago it took more than one generation to integrate into American society. Now it's six years," Sam Kliger triumphantly announced here last week to a room packed with about 100 of his fellow Jews from the former Soviet Union.

As chair of the emigre-founded Research Institute for New Americans, Kliger was unveiling a groundbreaking report on the Russian Jewish community's acculturation into New York life.

Despite the triumphant tone of those releasing the study, some Russian Jewish immigrants felt it presented an overly rosy picture by a community that — besieged by bad press about organized crime and welfare abuse — is eager to improve its public image. The study, done in partnership with the American Jewish Committee and based on a sampling of 1,014 immigrants in the United States, uses the term "Russian," but includes Jews from all parts of the former Soviet Union.

Of those surveyed, 40 percent have lived in America for more than six years; the rest arrived more recently.

The study of the estimated 400,000 Russian Jews living in the New York area — approximately half of the Russian Jewish emigres in North America and almost one-third of New York City's Jews — likely reflects the Russian Jewish experience in other major American cities, such as Los Angeles and Chicago, where immigrants have settled in large numbers, said Kliger and others familiar with the immigrant community.

Russian Jews who have settled in smaller communities may have different experiences, they said. Among the report's key findings:

- Jewish identity is "very important" or "important" to 67 percent of the Russian Jewish community.

- The Jewish identity of Russian Jews is more cultural and ethnic than religious. Only 11 percent of those surveyed say they practice Judaism, and only 17 percent say they observe Jewish customs.

- Forty-nine percent of Russian Jews "insist that their religion is Judaism and there is no alternative for them." Another 39 percent say they have no religion, 7 percent describe themselves as universalist, meaning all religions appeal equally to them, and 9 percent identify as Christian.

But of those Jews who say they have no religion or that all religions appeal equally, 46 percent still consider themselves to be Jews and that it is important to them.

The numbers led researchers to suggest that "up to 150,000 Russian Jewish immigrants in the New York area are candidates for information about synagogue membership and what it means to follow Judaism."

- Slightly less than half of the population is employed. Broken down by age, however, 56 percent of Russian Jews under age 65 — approximately 80 percent of the community — are employed, and the employment rate rises to 82 percent for those under 65 who have lived in the United States nine years or longer.

- At \$15,000 per family, the average income is considerably lower than the income for American Jews as a whole, which according to the 1990 National Jewish Population Study was \$39,000. However, among those who are employed and living in America more than six years, 24 percent have incomes of \$30,000 or higher, 21 percent earn \$50,000 or more and 11 percent have incomes of \$75,000 or higher.

- Jews from the former Soviet Union are "the most educated immigrant group in

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.S.: Iran may soon have nukes

U.S. national security officials are concerned that Iran, aided by Russia, may soon be able to produce nuclear weapons.

The New York Times reported Monday that the Central Intelligence Agency can no longer rule out the possibility that Iran may already be able to make such weapons.

Israeli bank posts accounts

Israel's Bank Leumi published on its Web site a list of close to 13,000 accounts that have not been accessed in more than 45 years. The move is aimed at locating the owners, or their heirs, of the dormant accounts. The site is located at www.bankleumi.co.il.

Jerusalem Post editor resigns

The executive editor of the Jerusalem Post announced his resignation, citing "irreconcilable differences" with the paper's management. David Makovsky's announcement came one week after the vice chairman of the paper's board of directors, Hirsch Goodman, stepped down.

Palestinians hand over suspect

Palestinian police handed over to their Israeli counterparts a Palestinian suspected of involvement in the murder of a child in Nazareth six months ago, according to the Palestinian police chief. Hisham Najem is accused of taking part in the rape and murder of the child.

Winds, rain lash Middle East

Heavy rains accompanied by winds as strong as 60 mph hit Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, prompting meteorologists to issue flood and hail warnings.

Snowstorms hit Mt. Hermon in the Golan Heights, while sandstorms raged in the Negev. Palestinian officials declared a state of emergency.



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American immigration history," according to the study, and they are better educated than their American Jewish counterparts. Sixty percent of Russian Jewish immigrants have five or more years of higher education, compared with 35 percent of other American Jews.

• Politically, today's immigrants are mainly independents — 34 percent — and Democrats — 30 percent — with only 7 percent identifying as Republican. This contrasts with those who emigrated during the Cold War era, who were overwhelmingly Republican. Still, the study notes the more recent immigrants are "more conservative" than American Jews as a whole, the majority of whom identify as Democrats.

• Overall satisfaction with their lives in the United States is high. Forty-three percent of immigrants report they are completely or mostly satisfied with their lives, and of those who have been in the country nine years or more, almost two-thirds are satisfied with their lives.

"You're talking about many people who've been here five or more years, and they've made it," said Mark Handelman, executive vice president of the New York Association for New Americans. "They're in the professions. Many have opened businesses and are successful in their lives. A majority have a sense of Jewish identity that's positive."

Many immigrants listening to the report's findings said it confirmed their belief that their community is highly educated. "There are many intelligent people, but we don't all know English," said Chaya Musman, a 77-year-old writer who was a lawyer in Russia. "American Jews have to use our potential."

Arkady Kagan, a journalist with the Russian Forward, one of more than 20 Russian-language newspapers to have sprung up in this country in the past decade, said, "I don't need to see the study to know we're the most hard-working, well-educated group of immigrants ever."

The community's newspaper boom is echoed by a growth in grass-roots organizations as well, with approximately 35 new groups — including RINA, synagogues, associations of Holocaust survivors and cultural organizations — formed by immigrants in New York alone. While Russian Jews tend to form their own organizations rather than join existing ones, a number of larger groups — and some synagogues — are making efforts to bring Russians in, often into decision-making positions. To work, however, outreach must take account of cultural differences and not appear patronizing, said those involved with Russians.

"They're not interested in being token representatives of their communities," said NYANA's Handelman. "They want real power and input."

Some immigrants attending the presentation found the study overly optimistic.

Leonid Goldin, who polls Russian Jews for the American Russian-language daily *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, said the RINA study was an important contribution but that future efforts should also look at more negative aspects about the adjustment to America lest it be "a kind of propaganda." In particular, Goldin questioned the finding that Russians become more Jewish here, noting that the same factors that lead so many American-born Jews to assimilate also affect immigrants.

"If we are so prosperous, why did we need to raise money for the study from the American Jewish Committee?" demanded Marina Temkina, president of the Archive for Jewish Immigrants Culture, referring to the fact that Russian Jews raised seed money for the study, but then received the bulk of funding from the AJCommittee.

Temkina noted that many immigrants who are employed only work part time and in low-level jobs, while still receiving government assistance.

"Why were there no statistics here on the number of people on SSI or receiving welfare?" she said. "I think this is a good beginning, but it's wishful."

RINA's Kliger defended the study, however, saying that "the reason for the study definitely was not because we wanted to make the image of the community better," but rather "the sincere desire to learn more about ourselves and to give more information about our community to the host community."

There will be plenty of time to tackle the problems in future studies, said Kliger, noting that RINA hopes to look at Russian involvement in organized crime, drug abuse and domestic violence, along with more neutral topics like involvement in Jewish communal life, attitudes in the 2000 elections and charitable giving. □

JEWISH WORLD

Media giant's Nazi past cited

German media giant Bertelsmann had close ties with the Nazi regime, particularly its Propaganda Ministry, an independent team of historians hired by the company has found.

Bertelsmann hired the research team after a German journalist published a story accusing the company of covering up its Nazi ties in the 1930s and 1940s.

Poland marks 'Day of Judaism'

Poland's Roman Catholic Church marked its third annual "Day of Judaism." As part of events designed to foster interfaith dialogue and education, Polish Jewish communal leaders joined Catholic priests and scholars Monday at conferences and ceremonies in several major cities. On Jan. 27, Poland plans to sponsor a number of events to mark the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Orthodox activists visit Israel

About 120 North American Orthodox community activists gathered in Jerusalem for a three-day mission to meet with Israeli political leaders and leaders of Israel's Orthodox community.

The group, which plans to discuss religious pluralism issues, will also attend the opening of an office in Israel of the Orthodox group Am Echad. The group was founded in 1997 and is best known for a series of advertisements and op-ed pieces presenting the fervently Orthodox perspective on issues like the "Who is a Jew?" controversy.

Latvia seeks help in Kalejs case

Latvian prosecutors investigating a suspected war criminal said they plan to ask Russia for help in building their case. Latvian officials have said they do not have enough evidence to prove that Konrad Kalejs was involved in the murders of thousands of Jews during World War II.

Latvian prosecutors said earlier this month that they had appealed to Britain, Israel and the Simon Wiesenthal Center for help in gathering evidence against Kalejs, who left Britain earlier this month for Australia.

Researchers watch gallstones

For what is believed to be the first time, Israeli researchers observed gallstones as they were forming. The development may help physicians learn how to inhibit their growth, according to researchers at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa.

The researchers, who conducted the observations using two state-of-the-art microscopy systems, plan to publish their findings in the February 2000 issue of the journal *Hepatology*.

Holocaust revisionist tells court in libel trial he's wanted in Germany

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — There is scarcely a dull moment these days in London's Royal Courts of Justice, where a Holocaust revisionist is engaged in a landmark libel case against a U.S. Holocaust scholar.

The latest twist came when David Irving announced to the court, just settling in for a protracted three-month trial, that he was anticipating his arrest by British police because a German court is seeking his extradition.

The long-standing warrant for his arrest, he said, relates to his claim that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were not genuine.

Irving cited the extradition as an example of the "the kind of hatred I face and the problems I face because of the repugnant allegations against me" in Deborah Lipstadt's 1993 book, "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory," published by Penguin Books. Irving is claiming that references to him in the book have "blackened" his name and damaged his career as a writer and historian by alleging that he manipulates data to suit his ideological preferences, labeling him a distorter of history and portraying him as a Holocaust denier.

The book, he said, had generated "waves of hatred against me."

As an example, he showed the judge a Jan. 12 article from the German daily *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, which reported that a court in nearby Weinheim had asked the British government to facilitate his extradition.

The extradition request stemmed from a lecture Irving had given in Weinheim in which he had asserted that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were a fake.

The lecture was given in September 1990, Irving was indicted for racial incitement in 1996 and extradition proceedings were launched in 1998.

Irving said no attempt had been made to serve a warrant against him, but, he declared, the British government had agreed to cooperate with Germany.

He also conceded that he had been fined \$24,000 and barred from Germany in 1992 for making the same statement at a meeting in Munich, also in 1990.

Earlier, in the course of five hours in the witness box, Irving denied that 6 million Jews had died in the Holocaust and told the high court that it was logistically impossible for the Nazis to have killed millions of Jews in gas chambers.

He also said there was no evidence that Hitler had sanctioned a systematic program of extermination of the Jews.

Irving, a 62-year-old author of some 30 books on World War II, conceded that the SS might have undertaken gassing experiments, but he denied that millions could have been killed in this way. Asked by lawyer Richard Rampton, appearing for Lipstadt, whether he agreed that 6 million had died "in one of the blackest chapters of 20th-century history," Irving replied, "A lot of the numbers are very suspect."

Judge Charles Gray told Irving: "It's said against you that you tried to blame what was done against the Jews by the Third Reich on Jews themselves."

Irving responded, "I have said on a number of occasions that if I was a Jew, I would be far more concerned not at who pulled the trigger, but why."

"Anti-Semitism is a recurring malaise in society," he continued. "There must be some reason why anti-Semitic groups break out like some kind of epidemic."

Rampton asked whether he accepted that the Nazis killed "by one means or another — murdered, hanged, put to death — millions of people during World War II?"

"Yes," replied Irving, adding: "I hesitate to speculate. It was certainly more than 1 million, certainly less than 4 million."

Although Irving conceded that the Jews had suffered a tragedy, he said "the people who died were not just Jews but Gypsies and homosexuals, the people of Coventry and the people of Hiroshima."

Asked how many innocent Jewish people he thought the Germans had killed deliberately, Irving raised the case of Anne Frank, who died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen at the age of 15. "She was a Jew who died in the Holocaust," he said, "And she wasn't murdered unless you take it in the broadest sense." □

NEWS ANALYSIS

When talks with Syria went sour, Barak moved seamlessly to Arafat*By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak did not waste any time bemoaning Syria's decision to postpone indefinitely the next round of peace talks.

Instead, within hours of formally acknowledging the postponement, the Israeli premier and Foreign Minister David Levy met Monday with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and his top deputies for a four-hour working session that lasted deep into the night.

Little of substance was divulged from this meeting, beyond the information that it had been held in a cordial atmosphere and that, in the words of an Israeli source, the spirit of mutual confidence between the two leaders had been enhanced.

The immediate interpretation put on the Barak-Arafat meeting by Israeli and Arab commentators was that Barak was "playing off" the Palestinians against the Syrians.

Arafat has in recent weeks called on Israel not to forget the Palestinian track as Barak renews negotiations with Syria — and Arafat was expected to reiterate the theme at a meeting later this week in Washington with President Clinton.

Barak has already lost some of his credit with Arafat after announcing earlier this week that Israel would postpone a redeployment from an additional 6.1 percent of the West Bank, a move originally slated to take place this week.

Lending credence to the playing-off theory is the fact that after Syria delivered Barak an ultimatum — either commit in advance to a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights or Syria will not turn up for the round of high-level talks originally slated for this week — Barak instantly tried to outflank Syria.

Beaming with confidence and good cheer, he told reporters Monday night that Syria should "take all the time it needs" before returning to the conference table.

By the next morning, his aides were reporting a long and pleasant meeting with the Palestinians.

Barak himself has consistently denied any desire or intention to play off the Palestinian and Syrian negotiating tracks against each other.

On the contrary, Barak claims, he is trying to meet all the deadlines he set for himself at the start of his tenure: a framework agreement with the Palestinians by mid-February; a withdrawal from southern Lebanon by July; a full peace agreement with Syria in the summer; and a peace agreement with the Palestinians by September.

As the end of January looms, the mid-February date seems unattainable.

Indeed, most Israeli observers assume that Barak and the Palestinian Authority president spent at least part of their long nocturnal meeting discussing elegant ways of extending this deadline without allowing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to lose momentum.

But Barak's team insists that, despite minor juggling with the calendar, the broad strategy is still on target.

They also maintain that the Syrian postponement is no more than a tactical delay.

The talks, Barak's team predicts confidently, will resume very soon.

They point to the fact that Syria, as well as Israel, agreed to send lower-level experts to Washington in the coming days in an effort to keep the peace process moving forward.

Barak's aides also point to the draft of an evolving peace treaty between Israel and Syria, leaked in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz last week, as evidence of the solid progress that has been made so far.

The draft, while registering divergent Israeli and Syrian positions on several key unresolved issues, represents a great deal of progress that had not been reflected in the public sparring between Jerusalem and Damascus, or indeed by the personal coldness radiated by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa during the first two rounds of the talks.

At the same time, though, the leaking of the draft may have led to the Syrian postponement.

While the draft showed that Israel had gained several important concessions during the negotiations, including a Syrian willingness to create full diplomatic relations and open their borders to trade, it did not indicate that Syria had won in return any concessions — particularly an Israeli commitment to withdraw from the Golan.

According to several reports, the leaking of the report embarrassed and irritated the Syrians and prompted their latest demand that the Jewish state commit to a full withdrawal from the Golan as a precondition for resuming the Barak-Sharaa negotiations.

On Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called the leak "unhelpful," but declined to say who might be responsible for it.

Meanwhile, the Israeli prime minister's aides are claiming that any difficulties that erupt with the Palestinians will not ultimately provoke a crisis, but rather will spur both sides to keep the peace process on track.

Arafat may grumble, they say, but he will eventually swallow the delay in the West Bank withdrawal slated for this week and will then instruct his negotiators to redouble efforts to reach the framework agreement — if not by the mid-February deadline, then a few weeks later.

While they echo the premier's denial of a playing-off strategy, they also state that the very fact of two parallel negotiating tracks has a beneficial effect on all concerned.

After all, they note, it is human nature not to want to get left behind.

This is the still-optimistic interpretation of events put out by Barak's spin doctors.

Some analysts, less trusting that Barak will be able to have things go his way every time, warn that this week's postponement by the Syrians may turn out to be less temporary than the Israelis and Americans predict.

Suspensions that last several years start, after all, with postponements.

Granted, it was encouraging to learn from Washington that contacts are under way with Damascus to fix another date for resuming high-level talks.

But until the negotiators are holed up in rural Shepherdstown or some other picturesque American hamlet, there is cause for concern. □