



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 25

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak vows revenge for soldiers

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak warned Hezbollah that it could expect retaliation for attacks that killed five Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon during the past two weeks.

"He who hurts us will be hurt," Barak said after conferring for more than six hours Monday with several ministers and military advisers, but did not elaborate on what action Israel would take.

Meanwhile, an adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak is urging that the army withdraw from Lebanon even ahead of a July deadline set by Barak. Communications Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer also called for an end to talks with Syria and for Israel to "hit out" in Lebanon "in order to make it clear that we are not a punching bag."

The fervently Orthodox Shas Party, the second largest party in the governing coalition, also called for an end to talks with Syria.

Marathon talks suspended

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators suspended marathon talks aimed at reaching a framework for a final peace accord. The senior Palestinian negotiator, Yasser Abed Rabbo, was quoted as saying he is waiting for U.S. proposals to reinvigorate the talks. Larry Schwartz, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, confirmed that American officials are trying to restart the talks.

Haider stirs more unease

Ethnic Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II are entitled to the same compensation as Jews who were persecuted by the Nazis, Jorg Haider said.

The comments from the Austrian far-right leader appear likely to increase unease about the inclusion of Haider's Freedom Party in the government.

Pollard petition rejected

Israel's High Court of Justice rejected a petition filed by Jonathan Pollard to compel the Jewish state to secure his immediate release and to see to all his medical and financial needs.

The judges decided Sunday that while they believe Israel will do everything possible to seek his release, they saw no legal reason to interfere.

NEWS ANALYSIS

It's not the Jews, but all of Europe that's sounding the alarm in Austria

By Ruth E. Gruber

VIENNA (JTA) — The entry of Jorg Haider's far-right Freedom Party into the Austrian government triggered international sanctions, demonstrations and street riots, and prompted calls by Israel and Jewish groups to isolate the country.

But the fact is that the current crisis in Austria is only marginally a Jewish issue.

"It is a problem of Austria, a problem of Europe and a problem of history," said Peter Bettelheim of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research and Consulting.

Even before the government was sworn in, the Freedom Party and its coalition partner, the center-right People's Party, were forced to sign an unprecedented document pledging to support democracy, combat anti-Semitism and accept responsibility for Austria's role in the Holocaust.

And President Thomas Klestil, who only reluctantly allowed the coalition to be formed, went on national TV to urge that the government be judged by its actions and to vow that he personally would monitor its progress.

The next step, say Austrians, is to see if they can live up to all these vows.

"We'll see if they put their actions where their mouth is, or where it was," said Robert Liska, a businessman and board member of the Austrian Jewish community.

Austrian Jews welcomed the tough diplomatic line against the new government and looked forward to international scrutiny of the new coalition.

The unprecedented political sanctions imposed by Austria's 14 European Union partners and the United States were directed far beyond Austria's borders at a rising tide of xenophobia and extreme-right parties that has spread across both Eastern and Western Europe.

"Many people feel that Europe is being haunted once again by fascism," Budapest sociologist Andras Kovacs said in a presentation.

"The illusions created by the euphoria that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall have been dispelled," he said. "Today — 10 years after the end of the Cold War — rather than the end of history and the final victory of liberal democracy, shouldn't we really be talking about the eternal recurrence of history and the deep crisis of Western democracies?"

The message of the sanctions was targeted both at Western countries where far right parties have garnered votes and at the former Communist states waiting in line to join the European Union.

These countries, including Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, have seen alarming groundswells of racism and xenophobia, particularly in relationship to the Gypsy — or Roma — population. Last year in the Czech town of Usti nad Labem, local residents erected a wall to block off a Gypsy housing block from the rest of its street.

"The E.U. wants to draw a very strict line on what is tolerable in regards to common values," said Marta Halpert, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Vienna-based Central Europe office. "That means, no right-radicals in government. It also is a warning to the East European candidates that they won't be welcome if they allow the rise of radical groups and they must resolve their minority problems before they enter the E.U."

Another motive for the sanctions, some analysts say, may have been a proactive attempt to redress Europe's failure to prevent disasters such as the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Balkan wars. The Yugoslav government of Slobodan Milosevic was

MIDEAST FOCUS

Report: Iran resupplies Hezbollah

Iran has stepped up arms shipments to Hezbollah gunmen in Lebanon, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The shipments, which would be impossible without Syria's authorization, are intended to prepare Hezbollah for weeks of intensive fighting, the paper added.

Shas leader won't face charges

Israel's High Court of Justice dismissed a petition to begin criminal proceedings against the spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party.

The complaint was brought after Rabbi Ovadia Yosef spoke publicly about the judges as "boalei nidot," Hebrew for people who have intercourse with ritually impure women.

While dismissing the application, Justices Aharon Barak and Mishael Heshin also criticized the rabbi's statements, saying they diminished his own stature.

Hamas spokesman released

The Palestinian Authority released a leading Hamas spokesman after jailing him for 21 months for speaking out against the peace process.

A Hamas official was quoted as saying that Monday's release of Abdel Aziz Rantissi resulted from the current impasse in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Nuclear plant called unsafe

A former senior scientist from Israel's Dimona nuclear plant said the facility is unsafe and should be shut down. Professor Uzi Even told Israel Radio on Sunday that Israel risks "serious damage" if it continues to use the reactor at current capacity.

He said the reactor was initially designed to operate for 30 years, but has been functioning for nearly 40 years. His comments came after the Knesset held its first-ever public debate last week on Israel's nuclear weapons capability.

one of the few to voice solidarity with the new Austrian coalition.

Said Robert Liska, "What we're really talking about is" that "in today's world there is a common denominator of Western democratic values. The pronouncements of Haider, the FPÖ and FPÖ functionaries do not fit into this common denominator."

The recognition of European history and the Holocaust, he said, "are part and parcel of this common consensus as much as is respect for minorities."

Haider's Freedom Party won 27 percent of the vote in general elections in October, becoming Austria's second largest party. Its platform mixes blatant xenophobia with nostalgic appeals to the patriotic values of the "good old days."

But it is Haider's persona, as much as the radical Freedom Party platform, that worries the international community, as well as the more than 70 percent of Austrian voters who rejected his party at the polls.

"He is socially acceptable suddenly," journalist Karin Wolf said in a televised interview. "Several years ago, no one would support him."

Haider demonstrated how a once-pariah party could reach the heights of power through the magnetism of a charismatic leader. Labeled by his critics as the "yuppie fascist," the 50-year-old son of Nazi supporters is a rabble-rousing populist and instinctive political animal who knows how to tailor his rhetoric, appearance and demeanor to suit his target audiences. He won international notoriety several years ago by making statements praising the Hitler regime.

"Haider has no line, no direction; he's amorphous and no one can pin him down," said Bettelheim. "The only thing he has is a feeling for resentment and how to exploit it. He plays a perfect role in a time of insecurity; a figure for the media. He combines the appeal of a rock star, a rowdy and a yuppie."

Placards carried by the anti-Haider demonstrators, who have taken to the streets nightly since the government, was sworn in frequently compare him to Hitler, and commentators have compared his rise to power with the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s.

But Joanna Nittenberg, the editor of the Vienna Jewish monthly *Neue Welt*, warns against overstating the case.

"The FPÖ in government is our worse dream," she said. "But Haider is not Hitler. Haider is a populist, he wants power, he wants to be chancellor. But comparing him to Hitler minimizes Hitler. If we exaggerate too much, we can lose credibility."

Although there was a backlash of support for Haider in public opinion polls in the face of the international condemnation, many Austrians appear to have been galvanized politically by the situation.

"We want to organize protests against the new government because we don't think this is a normal change," said Petra, a 17-year-old with pierced lip and ears, who was gathering anti-Haider signatures for the left-wing group. "The FPÖ is dangerous. It is against workers rights, and its racism is also dangerous."

Many see the current crisis, as a major, possibly cathartic, installment in Austria's belated examination of its Nazi past, which began only in the late 1980s when Kurt Waldheim was elected president despite evidence he had concealed his own Nazi history. In this context, Leon Zelman, a Holocaust survivor who heads the Jewish Welcome Service, which aids Jewish visitors to Austria, called on Jewish groups not to abandon the overwhelming majority of Austrians who oppose Haider, but rather to help them in their fight.

"Europe is reacting the way it must react," he said. "But at the same time, I will be happy to find an understanding world for the thousands and thousands of young people who go out on the street to protest this new government."

In the current situation, he says, Austrians, and particularly young Austrians and others susceptible to Haider's appeal, need education and support in liberal values more than ever — not just to counter anti-Semitism, but to counter all forms of racism.

"The Holocaust will and cannot ever happen again," he said. "But the beginning of the Holocaust was not Auschwitz. Auschwitz was the end. The beginning was intolerance. And not just intolerance against Jews. We teach young people about the Holocaust, yes, but we need to teach them what prepared the way."

Zelman has organized a concert and ceremony to be held May 7 at the Mauthausen concentration camp to mark the 55th anniversary of its liberation, which he hopes will send such a message. The majority of Mauthausen inmates were not Jewish. □



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Lovy, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

CIA anti-Semitism charges aired

A former CIA employee who claims he was fired from the agency because he is a religious Jew was featured on a segment of CBS' "60 Minutes" on Sunday night.

Adam Ciralsky charged that the agency's counterintelligence investigators ignored all secular information about him while focusing on his religion. He said they focused on his travels to Israel rather than a trip he made to China.

"I lived in China for a summer," he said. "They could have cared less whether I was associating with known Communists, but they were incredibly concerned about who sold me a falafel sandwich." Meanwhile, a CIA memo charged that Ciralsky failed two lie-detector tests about whether he gave or sold U.S. secrets to Israel.

Hillary backs Israel at launch

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton voiced her support for Israel during her speech announcing her candidacy for a Senate seat in New York.

Stating some of her positions Sunday, she said she would back a peace in the Middle East that "guarantees Israel's security."

Brandeis gets \$20 million gift

Brandeis University recently received a \$20 million gift that is believed to be the largest in the school's history.

The gift from Carl and Ruth Shapiro will build a student center at the Waltham, Mass., campus.

Pianist protests Austrians

A Hungarian-born pianist has refused to play a concert at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, Hungarian radio reported.

One of the world's best-known concert pianists, Andras Schiff said in a message sent to the embassy that as an Austrian citizen and a European Jew he is "deeply upset" by the inclusion of Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in the Austrian government.

Hitler limo may be sold

Canada's War Museum is considering selling off a black Mercedes limousine convertible in which Adolf Hitler regularly rode.

Jack Granatstein, the museum's director, says the car might fetch as much as \$20 million if sold at auction.

Former federation leader dies

Samuel Silberman, a former cigar manufacturing executive and philanthropist, died Jan. 29 at 84.

Silberman was president of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York in the late 1960s.

Past racist, anti-Semitic utterances thrown back at revisionist during trial

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — A racist poem read to a young child has provided the toughest test for a Holocaust revisionist who is suing a U.S. Holocaust scholar and her publisher for libel.

Discussing David Irving's "utterances both in public and private on the subject" of Jews and blacks, Richard Rampton, scholar Deborah Lipstadt's attorney, accused Irving last week of teaching his 9-month-old daughter a "racist ditty" while taking her for a walk. The London lawyer quoted a September 1994 extract from Irving's private journal, which he was obliged to hand over as part of an exchange of documents, where the revisionist referred to a song he had sung when "half-breed children" were wheeled past:

"I am a Baby Aryan / Not Jewish or Sectarian. / I have no plans to marry an / Ape or Rastafarian."

Rampton asked: "Racist, Mr. Irving? Anti-Semitic, Mr. Irving?"

Irving: "I don't think so."

Rampton: "Teaching your little child this kind of poison?"

Irving: "Do you think a 9-month-old can understand..."

Rampton: "The poor little child is being taught a racist ditty by her perverted racist father."

Irving: "I am not a racist."

The dramatic exchange came midway through the trial of Lipstadt and Penguin Books, who are alleged to have libeled Irving in Lipstadt's 1994 book "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory."

Irving, 62, who denies that Jews were systematically exterminated at Auschwitz, is claiming that Lipstadt ruined his career by labeling him a Holocaust denier and accusing him of distorting historical data to suit his ideological predilections.

Rampton asked Irving about his 1997 book "A Radical's Diary," in which he attacked Jews for their greed.

"They clamor, 'Ours! Ours! Ours!' when hoards of gold are uncovered," wrote Irving. "And then when antisemitism increases and the inevitable mindless pogroms occur, they ask with genuine surprise, 'Why us?'"

Irving, who is representing himself, was also asked about an interview he gave in November 1998 in which he also suggested that Jews' greed trigger anti-Semitism.

"The question which would concern me if I was a Jew is not 'Who pulled the trigger,' but 'Why are we disliked? Is it something we are doing?'"

"You people," he told his interviewer, "are disliked on a global scale. You have been disliked for 3,000 years, and yet you never seem to ask what is at the root of this dislike," adding that "no sooner do you arrive as a people in a new country than, within 50 years, you are already being disliked all over again."

He added, "I would say that they're a clever race. I would say that as a race they are better at making money than I am. That's a racist remark, of course. But they appear to be better at making money than I am. If I was going to be crude, I would say not only are they better at making money, but they are greedy."

Invited to explain his remarks to the court, Irving said, "In my own clumsy way, I am trying to find out why we don't like them. It's a very coherent expression of the anti-Semitic tragedy. I am putting myself in the skin of a person asking questions about a clever people."

At one point, the court was shown a video of Irving addressing a right-wing American organization, the National Alliance, in Tampa, Fla., in October 1995, when he discussed the "legend of the Holocaust."

Irving denied any association with the National Alliance, but Rampton pointed out that he had spoken at its events eight times between 1990 and 1998.

Asked why he had said in his Tampa speech that he found the Holocaust story "boring," Irving replied, "I think 95 percent of the thinking public find the Holocaust boring by now, but don't say it because it's politically incorrect." □

Scholars join to condemn Syrian editorial denying the Shoah

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Some unlikely allies have united to support a statement condemning a Holocaust-denying editorial in an official Syrian newspaper.

Eleven Holocaust scholars have joined leaders of the Zionist Organization of America in the statement, which accuses Israel of exaggerating the Holocaust.

Despite widespread agreement that the editorial contains "outrageous and offensive statements," signers to the statement split on whether such an action should disqualify Syria from participation in the peace process.

Among the signers are Elie Wiesel and Rabbi Irving Greenberg, who is expected to be named chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Council.

Not all the scholars share ZOA's contention, absent from the statement but articulated in a phone interview by the group's national president, Morton Klein, that until the Syrians "begin to preach peace, conciliation and the truth about the Holocaust" there should be "no consideration of giving this terroristic dictator any land or U.S. aid."

"I part company with the ZOA, whose policies I abhor," said Michael Berenbaum, a professor of Holocaust studies and the former director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Research Institute. "But I also abhor Holocaust denial."

All the scholars say the Syrian editorial of Jan. 31 — which called the Holocaust "a myth" and said that "Israeli policies are worse than Nazi policies" — merits strong condemnation and does not create a good atmosphere for discussing peace.

Berenbaum, who described himself as an "ardent supporter" of Israel's efforts to achieve peace with Syria, said he does not think a Syrian condemnation of the editorial should be a precondition for continued negotiations, but it is "an issue that indicates there has not yet been a full change of heart" among Syria's leadership.

The ZOA statement, which is scheduled to appear as a full-page advertisement in The New York Times and 15 Jewish newspapers around the country this week, as well as some Israeli papers, calls on Syrian President Hafez Assad to publicly denounce the editorial and take steps "to ensure that Syrian government publications in the future refrain from denying or distorting the Holocaust."

Some of the scholars, like Hebrew University Professor Emil Fackenheim, share ZOA's wariness of Middle East peace efforts and believe Israel should be careful in negotiating with a country that foments hate against it.

Others said they were not usually comfortable with the organization or were worried that their participation in the statement could appear to be political.

"It doesn't say anything about the peace process, does it?" Alvin Rosenfeld, director of the Jewish studies program at Indiana University, asked when contacted by JTA.

Rosenfeld said he had agreed to put his name on the statement only after being reassured that it did not mention the peace talks.

"I did not sign it as a political statement, but in my capacity as a scholar of the Holocaust and as one of the many people who

object to the defamation of the Holocaust," he continued. "The political dimensions don't figure into it. That could be naive, but that's my position."

The statement condemning the Syrian editorial is also signed by the leaders of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Anti-Defamation League.

Also this week, a Lebanese newspaper defended the Syrian paper's charge.

Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, condemned the Syrian editorial but declined to comment on whether it would stand in the way of talks resuming between Israel and Syria. □

ADL stands apart in advocating a dialogue with Austrian nation

By Julie Wiener and Peter Ephross

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Anti-Defamation League is setting itself apart from Israel and most other American Jewish organizations in its refusal to boycott Austria.

"I don't think the way you deal with the problem" of the extreme-right Freedom Party's participation in Austria's governing coalition is to isolate Austria, said the national director of the ADL, Abraham Foxman.

"The way you deal with the problem is to interact with the Austrians."

The inclusion of Jorg Haider, who has praised Hitler's employment policies and praised members of the Nazi SS, but later apologized for the remarks, has sparked international condemnation and calls for Austria to be diplomatically isolated.

Israel recalled its ambassador to Austria, and the 14 governments of the European Union downgraded diplomatic relations with Vienna.

A number of Jewish organizations, including ADL's founding organization, B'nai B'rith International, have issued statements calling for the diplomatic isolation of Austria.

The ADL is one of the only major American Jewish organizations with an office in Austria, and the ADL rents office space to the Austrian mission to the United Nations, one of several tenants — including the European Union and Spain — at its building at United Nations Plaza in New York.

But Foxman, who said his group receives no money from Austria, said these facts are not affecting his group's opposition to the isolation campaign.

"If a country that rented space from us became a neo-Nazi dictatorship, yes, we'd evict them, but that's not where Austria is," said Foxman.

Haider is an opportunist, a xenophobe and a demagogue, "but he is not an anti-Semite or a neo-Nazi," said Foxman.

Isolating Austria is "a mistake," he said, noting that "all that would do is strengthen Haiderism in Austria."

"When we isolated them last time, they elected Kurt Waldheim president," said Foxman, referring to the former Nazi who served as president of Austria in the late 1980s.

Instead, he advocates "engaging and challenging" Austrians, "saying let's work together to develop programs which deal with the past, deal with democracy and fight xenophobia." □