



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 40

Wednesday, March 1, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Haider move seen as a ploy

Jorg Haider's resignation as leader of Austria's anti-immigrant Freedom Party is widely seen as a ploy aimed at helping him become chancellor in the future. Israel said it would not return its ambassador to Vienna following Haider's resignation. [Page 3]

Eichmann memoirs admit Shoah

Israel released the prison memoirs Adolf Eichmann wrote prior to his execution in Israel in 1962.

The chief logician of the Holocaust tried to show that while he was a minor cog in the machine, the slaughter of the Jews did occur.

The memoirs are titled "False Gods," an apparent reference to Eichmann's claim that Nazi ideology led him astray. [Page 1]

Farrakhan sparks new anger

American Jewish groups are outraged at Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan for having an official with the fervently Orthodox, anti-Zionist group Neturei Karta speak at a recent meeting of the Nation of Islam.

The Midwest regional director of the American Jewish Committee, Jonathan Levine, criticized the controversial Farrakhan for "passing off a tiny sect of Jews best known for equating Zionism with Nazism as representative of a new relationship with the Jewish community."

AIDS disclosure prompts debate

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz's disclosure that a pop star died of complications from AIDS is creating controversy within the Jewish state that the newspaper violated Ofra Haza's privacy.

Haza, who died in a Tel Aviv hospital last week, had requested that the hospital keep her illness a secret.

Sentence given in refugee scam

A Toronto-based consultant who helped dozens of Russians immigrate to Canada by pretending they were persecuted Jews pleaded guilty Monday and was placed on one year of strict probation.

Galina Slipachenko admitted that she traveled to Russia and advised clients to obtain visitors' visas for the United States and then make refugee claims at the Canadian border.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Eichmann again a 'cog,' but to discredit deniers

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Five large envelopes containing a 1,105-page memoir in the archaic Gothic handwriting of Adolf Eichmann may now hold the key to a dramatic libel trial currently being played out in London.

The memoir, written while Eichmann, chief engineer of the Holocaust, was in an Israeli jail awaiting execution in 1962 following his landmark trial, has been locked away in Israel's National Archive for more than 35 years.

Now this document has been given new life and, unwittingly, new purpose in the hands of lawyers in London who are defending U.S. Holocaust scholar Deborah Lipstadt.

Lipstadt is being sued by Holocaust revisionist David Irving, who claims he was libeled by Lipstadt in her 1994 book "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory," published in Britain by Penguin Books.

Irving, who denies that Auschwitz was a death camp and insists that the number of Jewish victims has been grossly inflated, maintains that his career was wrecked after allegedly being accused by Lipstadt of distorting historical data to suit his ideological perspective and being labeled a Holocaust denier.

Under British libel law, the onus is on Lipstadt to show that her contentions are accurate: She has to prove that Irving possessed information about the Holocaust that he deliberately distorted, selected or suppressed to suit his own purposes.

Irving is making full use of this advantage in the courtroom by simply claiming that he is not an expert in the Holocaust, a subject that he told the judge he finds boring. By asserting his relative ignorance of the subject, Irving increases the burden of proof on Lipstadt and her defense team.

But the Eichmann memoir — which is said to contain a meticulous record of the ghettos and the cattle trains that took millions of Jews to the death camps of Eastern Europe — might change all that.

While the memoir has been kept under lock and key in Jerusalem for the past 40 years, it has been available to a handful of scholars.

And Irving, crucially, is among the few who are believed to have acquired a detailed knowledge of the memoir.

In the past, Irving has claimed to have received two packages containing 426 pages of the document from a member of Eichmann's family while he was in Buenos Aires during a lecture tour in 1991.

He has used parts of the Eichmann account, presumably confident that they would never be made public, to support his contention that there was no systematic genocide and that Hitler neither gave orders nor had knowledge of any mass killings of Jews.

In a 1997 letter to Robert Jan van Pelt, a Holocaust historian who testified for Lipstadt earlier in the trial, Irving also cited the Eichmann memoir to cast doubt on the existence of gas chambers. He claimed that while Eichmann described an "experimental" truck gassing, he was never shown a gas chamber at Auschwitz.

Irving's presumption that the Eichmann memoir would remain securely locked away might prove to be the fatal flaw in his case.

"There was no denial of the Holocaust there," said Gavriel Bach, a junior prosecution counsel at the Eichmann trial in 1961 who went on to become an Israeli Supreme Court judge and was the first person to read the memoir. "Eichmann tried to

MIDEAST FOCUS

Shoah education urged in Europe

Israel's Education Minister sent a letter to his counterparts throughout Europe urging them to enact Holocaust education programs.

Citing the rise of Austria's far-right Freedom Party, Yossi Sarid wrote, "Let us cooperate to stop the spread of hatred and racism in Europe before it is allowed to poison the minds of our precious youth."

Sudan won't work with 'Zionists'

Sudan's president said the United States offered to improve ties with his Islamist-led government if it recognized Israel, according to the London-based Arabic newspaper al-Hayat. Omar Hassan Bashir told the paper he declined the offer. "We refuse any relations with the Jews and Zionists, but we will work to improve relations with America," he said.

Levy fends off no-confidence vote

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy fought off a parliamentary no-confidence motion submitted by Arab parties over his recent fiery rhetoric against Hezbollah.

During Monday's stormy debate, Levy called Hezbollah a "crazy organization whose declared purpose is to spill the blood of Jews." The house defeated the no-confidence motion, 58-8.

Israel helps Mozambique victims

Israel is sending aid to flood victims in Mozambique. The blankets, medicines, tents and food are expected to arrive within a few days.

Cartoonist dies at 78

Veteran Israeli cartoonist Kariel Gardos, whose cap-wearing character Srulik became a symbol of Israel, died of cardiac arrest Monday at the age of 78. Gardos, known as "Dosh," was born in Budapest.

He survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel in 1948.

show that he was a minor cog in the machine and he had to obey orders, but he describes how terrible it was."

Said Bach: "He wanted his family to see it, and to see his role. Maybe he wanted to convince his family he did not take a central part in the Final Solution."

Now retired, Bach was Eichmann's main contact with the outside world while he was in jail.

At one point, after witnessing the liquidation of a group of Jews, Eichmann's memoirs, perhaps self-servingly, record his shock and his consumption of large quantities of alcohol as a tranquilizer to relieve his tension.

"In court," recalled Bach, "he admitted it was the most terrible crime in history. He says how he almost fainted when he saw the geysers of blood coming out of the bodies in the ditches."

Bach served on the panel of Israeli scholars and lawyers who decided Sunday night that the memoir should be given immediately to aid Lipstadt's defense. A spokesman for Israel's Justice Ministry said the panel agreed to give Lipstadt's lawyers a copy of the memoir as soon as possible "so she can defend herself in a lawsuit brought by a Holocaust denier."

And maybe, too, the final labors of the "Final Solution's" chief logician will also serve, unwittingly, to put to rest the contention that the Holocaust never happened. □

Cuban native returns to find dad's name in Havana synagogue

By Brianne Korn

NEW YORK (JTA) — The writing on the wall was clear for Natan Wekselbaum in 1961. The time had come to leave his native Cuba.

Almost 40 years later, the writing on the wall of a synagogue in Havana made his trip back worthwhile.

Wekselbaum, who now lives in New York, returned to Cuba recently for the first time in 35 years as part of an American interfaith delegation.

After touring and visiting his old haunts, Wekselbaum made a startling discovery in the synagogue where he used to pray.

"My father was one of the contributors to builders of the shul," he said, describing how he saw his father's name on the temple's founders plaque hanging on the wall. "I didn't know that. It was a life-changing experience."

Wekselbaum decided to return to Cuba to accompany Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president and founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

"My overall impression is that there's a surge and renewed interest in Jewish identity," Schneier said, adding that he observed greater synagogue attendance since his last visit in 1994. "But there is still a greater need for support."

The foundation was founded to provide support to any country where religious freedom is impaired. Schneier — who organized the foundation's visit to the country, the group's third — was accompanied by political figures and heads of the Catholic and Jewish groups in New York.

The Jewish community in Cuba, about 700 people concentrated largely in Havana, benefits from Cuban leader Fidel Castro's increased acceptance of religious practices. The rabbi also credits the visit of Pope John Paul II's visit in 1998 with the more relaxed attitude toward religious Cubans.

"Until 1992 if you attended church or synagogue you were a pariah," Schneier said. "Fear about the manifestation of one's belief and practice has largely vanished compared to the conditions I found on my first visit to Cuba in 1988," he said.

Wekselbaum, though, was not so impressed.

"I think when Castro came there was a certain hope that he would work for social problems, but it didn't happen," he said.

"After so many years the country has stood still."

As for the future of the Jewish community in the Communist country, the Cuban native is uncertain.

"The best that can be hoped for is small individual steps of goodwill," he said. □



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Howard Levy, *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

JCPA reaffirms school stance

Delegates at an annual conference of a U.S. Jewish umbrella organization voted to reaffirm its traditional opposition to public funding for private education.

By a vote of 318-259 following a vigorous debate, the delegates at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs meeting removed a clause that would have allowed court-approved exceptions.

A Supreme Court decision is pending on whether to allow the government to provide textbooks and computers to private schools.

Brooklyn day schools face probe

The records of several Orthodox day schools in Brooklyn that receive subsidized day care vouchers have been subpoenaed as part of a federal investigation.

The probe, being conducted by the Brooklyn U.S. Attorney's Office and the city's Department of Investigation, is focusing on whether the families benefitting from the vouchers met the income eligibility requirements.

The investigation is also looking into whether the vouchers — half of which were distributed among Jewish schools — were equitably allocated.

Canadian faces denaturalization

A Canadian judge ruled that a man obtained Canadian citizenship in 1954 by fraudulently concealing his wartime past.

Helmut Oberlan served in a German unit during World War II that murdered tens of thousands of Jews.

The country's immigration minister can now recommend that Oberlan, a native Ukrainian, be stripped of his citizenship.

Russian mogul wins slander suit

The president of an umbrella Russian Jewish group won a defamation suit against another Russian media tycoon.

A Russian court ruled that Kremlin insider Boris Berezovsky, who owns the national television channel ORT, had slandered the Russian Jewish Congress' Vladimir Goussinsky by saying on the air that Goussinsky had financial interests in showing positive coverage of Chechen separatists.

Britain lists looted works

British museum directors published a list of more than 300 artworks that may have been looted from Jews by the Nazis.

The directors hope that Tuesday's move will help them obtain more information from the public about the works.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Haider's resignation may mask plan to become Austria's leader

By Ruth E. Gruber

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Jorg Haider's unexpected resignation as head of Austria's far-right Freedom Party is widely seen as a strategic ploy that may ultimately win him more political power — including the nation's leadership.

"It is important not to overestimate" the move, Marta Halpert, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Vienna-based Central Europe office, told JTA. "It is a tactical move designed to take a little pressure off the government. The question is whether it will be acknowledged.

"Haider's influence remains," she said. "The party is not headless."

Haider announced his resignation as leader of the Freedom Party, known as the FPO, during a closed-door meeting of the party leadership Monday night.

Explaining the move, he said he wanted to concentrate on his job as governor of Austria's southern state of Carinthia.

He turned the party leadership over to close aide Susanne Riess-Passer, who serves as vice chancellor in the center-right coalition led by Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel.

Haider, who himself is not a member of the Cabinet, told a news conference Monday night that the "double commitment" of being party leader and governor was "too much for anyone."

But he also said he had no intention of disappearing permanently.

"I want to make clear that I am not running away from national politics, just making a new constellation in our party leadership," he said.

Asked if he still hoped to be chancellor one day, he replied: "I do not exclude it."

The entry of the Freedom Party into government Feb. 4 polarized the country. It triggered domestic and foreign protests, including diplomatic isolation by Austria's 14 European Union partners and other countries, including Israel.

The Freedom Party won 27 percent of the vote in Austria's elections last October, becoming the country's second largest party and the strongest far-right force in Europe.

The party ran on an anti-immigrant, law-and-order platform. Haider, the son of Nazi sympathizers, won notoriety in past years by praising aspects of Hitler's Nazi Reich. He has repeatedly apologized for the remarks.

Haider's resignation did not impress foreign leaders.

Israel, which withdrew its ambassador to Vienna even before the new government was sworn in, said it would not return its envoy.

Asked if the ambassador would return, Foreign Minister David Levy told reporters Tuesday, "Unequivocally, no."

The prime minister of Portugal, whose country holds the rotating E.U. presidency, was also far from impressed by the resignation.

"The problem is not Jorg Haider, but what his party represents," Anotonio Guterres said Tuesday.

The United States said it would closely monitor developments.

Haider's resignation "doesn't change our concerns. The Freedom Party is still part of the government," said State Department spokesman James Rubin.

Haider denied that he was stepping down as the result of political pressure.

Haider said his resignation was intended to dispel speculation that he was pulling the strings from Carinthia, but friends and foes alike said Haider certainly will continue to wield political power.

"His influence will still be felt in the party — and this is for the good," Peter Sichrovsky, an FPO member of the European Parliament and one of the few Austrian Jews known to support the party, told the BBC.

He called foreign reaction to Haider "hysteria" that "no one takes seriously."

Many commentators said Haider's decision could actually be designed as a means for him to consolidate power. Vienna's conservative Die Presse newspaper called it a shrewd move that would enable him to distance himself from unpopular government decisions such as planned tax increases and to position himself for the next election, due within four years. □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Barak dangles the Golan, waits for Assad to grab it***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has placed his latest bet in the strange and frustrating poker game between Israel and Syria.

Now it is up to the Syrians to either see the bet and resume the stalled peace negotiations — or fold and walk away from the game, perhaps for many years to come.

Israeli officials say the fateful decision must come from Damascus within weeks, or else, with the Clinton administration's term moving toward its end, the window of opportunity will close.

Barak's move, coordinated in advance with Washington, was to state for the first time that Israel is prepared to withdraw from the whole of the Golan Heights to the border that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War. The offer is still somewhat ambiguous because, in Israel's view, that border is yet to be precisely demarcated.

Moreover, Barak still insists that he will not hand over any of the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee to Syria.

Just the same, a withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 line means a total pullback from the towering Golan to the Galilee valley below. The geographical advantage secured by the Israeli army during the Six-Day War would be completely surrendered.

Barak, in a lengthy and carefully prepared policy review, claimed during a marathon Cabinet session Sunday that his four predecessors had all, in effect, secretly offered Syrian President Hafez Assad this same total withdrawal.

The difference was that now Barak was doing so formally and, in effect, publicly. Though he made the statement behind closed doors, his words were soon relayed to the media.

Damascus viewed his comments as the first confirmation of a long-held Syrian contention that former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had told then-U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher he was willing to cede the Golan to Damascus in return for a full peace. Formal negotiations between Israel and Syria resumed last December after being suspended for close to four years. The talks were again suspended in January, when Syria demanded that Israel state in writing that it is willing to withdraw from the Golan.

With the help of U.S. diplomats, there have been subsequent informal contacts. Washington is said to be pressing for agreement on the most substantive issues before a formal resumption of the negotiations in order to ensure that the process does not run aground again. If this can be achieved, the two sides could sign a peace treaty this spring.

Barak's position now is:

- A phased withdrawal from the Golan to the prewar line;
- Extensive demilitarization and limitation of forces on the Syrian side of the line;
- Other security arrangements, including an Israeli presence for a period of years at the Mount Hermon surveillance station, which would be operated by the United States;
- Diplomatic relations at an early stage of the withdrawal process;
- Other elements of normalization, including trade and tourism; and,
- Agreement among Israel, Syria and Lebanon that would end

the fighting in southern Lebanon and enable Israeli troops to return home by the summer.

For his part, Assad, is demanding an Israeli withdrawal before normalizing relations. He is also sticking to his demand that Israel provide a written commitment to withdraw from the Golan before the formal resumption of the negotiations.

Assad, moreover, denies that he ever agreed to a continued Israeli presence at the Hermon station, and that both sides demilitarize and limit their forces at equal distances from the border.

Israeli officials say that if these positions do not change there will be no deal.

Barak's dramatic raising of the stakes across the poker table this week, while welcomed in Washington, drew much stinging criticism inside Israel, and not only from the opposition.

Israel's largest newspapers faulted the prime minister for trying to draw his predecessors into his negotiating gambit.

Yediot Achronot wrote in its editorial column Tuesday that this tactic betrays a lack of courage that hardly accorded with the image Barak cultivates of himself as a straight-talking, head-held-high national leader. A leading Ma'ariv columnist wrote Monday that Barak had shot himself in the foot by attempting to use the hawkish former Likud premier Yitzhak Shamir.

Barak maintained during Sunday's Cabinet session that Shamir had implicitly agreed to a total Golan withdrawal back in 1991, when he consented to attend the Madrid Peace Conference on the basis of an invitation that referred to the U.N. Security Council's land-for-peace Resolution 242.

Rabin, said Barak, told Christopher that Israel was ready in principle to pull back to the June 4 line if all the other elements of the peace package fell into place.

Shimon Peres, Barak went on, endorsed Rabin's position.

And Benjamin Netanyahu, Barak's immediate predecessor, conveyed to the Syrians his willingness to withdraw to the prewar line in a secret dialogue conducted by U.S. businessman Ronald Lauder, who now serves as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Shamir and Netanyahu flatly denied Barak's version of history.

"I was always against any withdrawal on any front," the still-feisty Shamir declared.

Netanyahu, reacting from New York, said his secret negotiations failed precisely because he was not prepared to commit to total withdrawal. Leah Rabin, speaking for her slain husband, was equivocal, and Shimon Peres said he "focused on economic issues rather than on the border line."

Writing in Ma'ariv, columnist Chemi Shalev accused Barak of being "typically overreaching himself with his too-clever-by-half interpretation of the Madrid conference."

The whole country knew, Shalev wrote, that Shamir refused to make territorial concessions and did not intend to make them, explicitly or implicitly, at Madrid.

The political wisdom of Barak's historiography would be merely academic were it not for his need to win the Israeli public's support in the referendum that he has promised to hold when and if a peace treaty is concluded with Syria.

At present, according to the polls, that support is by no means assured.

Superfluous sparring with Likud predecessors over now-irrelevant history, instead of strengthening him, may boomerang against Barak in the battle for public opinion. □