



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 106

Wednesday, June 7, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Talks moving to Washington

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will begin intensive talks in the Washington area next week, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said.

She also announced that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat would meet President Clinton at the White House on June 14.

"The moment of truth" for reaching a final agreement is near, Albright said after meeting with Arafat in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Tuesday. [Page 3]

Defense rests in 'Iran 13' case

Attorneys representing the 13 Iranian Jews accused of spying for Israel submitted their final written arguments Tuesday, formally ending the widely condemned hearing.

The judge will render his verdict within days, "unless there are more delaying tactics," said an American Jewish observer. Meanwhile, American Jewish leaders made a last-minute plea for clemency.

Clinton, Abdullah meet in D.C.

President Clinton met with Jordan's King Abdullah at the White House.

The talks came amid reports that Israel is prepared to transfer significant portions of the Jordan Valley to the Palestinians, a move that would affect Jordan's security.

Barak wary of Syrian intentions

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak accused Syria of planning to use southern Lebanon as a launching pad for attacks on Israel.

"There is a Syrian attempt to recruit Palestinian activists to send them to act against Israel," Barak said during a tour of northern Israel on Tuesday. "If it happens, we'll know what to do."

Funds pledged for Israel's north

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews pledged \$1 million in relief aid for South Lebanon Army refugees and residents of northern Israel.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein of Chicago, the nonprofit organization's founder and president, announced the pledge after he visited the Israeli-Lebanese border and met with the mayors of Metulla and Kiryat Shmona.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

American Jews were 'misled' in flap over Russia's chief rabbi

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Given the long tradition of Russian anti-Semitism and concern for the apparently authoritarian instincts of the new Russian president, it was perhaps not surprising that Jewish leaders around the world reacted swiftly to the Russian chief rabbi's claim last week that the Kremlin was pressuring him to resign his post.

But after hearing Rabbi Adolf Shayevich recant his charge here Monday and describe it as "a misunderstanding," American Jewish leaders concede they may have jumped the gun.

The controversy seems to be rooted in the communal in-fighting that now characterizes Russian Jewry, but it also reaches to the highest levels of Russian politics, thanks to the bitter rivalry between President Vladimir Putin and prominent businessman Vladimir Goussinsky. Goussinsky, a media mogul who supported Putin's political rivals and is now under attack by the Putin government, also is president of the Russian Jewish Congress, which backs Shayevich.

With Goussinsky and Shayevich now embroiled in an incident that has taken on huge national dimensions — even international ones, as President Clinton was reportedly asked to intervene during his visit this week with Putin — it remains to be seen if it will have repercussions for Russian Jews, estimated at 600,000.

Furthermore, the situation raises the question of when — and how vociferously — American Jews should get involved in such situations.

After meeting with Shayevich in New York on Monday, one American Jewish leader said he felt he had been "misled," while another said the situation was not as black and white as it had seemed last week.

"I think it's been a miscommunication, and we're trying to sort through it now," said Mark Levin, executive director of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia.

Shayevich explained his actions behind closed doors to members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella group.

Speaking later to reporters, he said he had concluded from several recent incidents that he was being pressured to resign, but clarified that the pressure did not explicitly come from Putin or his circle.

Shayevich, who was first installed by the Communist regime as the chief rabbi of the Soviet Union in 1989 and was later elected by the Jewish community as the chief rabbi of Russia, hinted the incident was connected to the government's conflict with Goussinsky.

"Maybe these are some political games," the rabbi said at a news conference following his meeting with Jewish leaders here, "and they are trying to pull us into this conflict."

Shayevich said he sensed something was amiss when he was snubbed and not invited to two major state events — Putin's inauguration and the official commemoration of the end of World War II — when in the past he had always been invited to such occasions, along with other religious leaders.

Then came alleged warnings from the camp of a rival rabbi, Berel Lazar, the head of the Lubavitch movement in Russia, that Shayevich's days as chief rabbi were numbered and he should plan his retirement. Lazar strongly denied that his organization

MIDEAST FOCUS

March of Living link a 'mistake'

An organizer of a planned march by Israeli settlers to protest any further land transfers to the Palestinians admitted he "may have made a mistake" in naming the procession "March of the Living."

The march to Jerusalem uses the same name as an annual procession between the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps in Poland in which young people retrace the steps Jews took to their deaths.

Militant denies Lockerbie charge

The leader of a militant Palestinian group denied charges by a man claiming to be an Iranian defector that the group was involved in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Ahmed Jibril, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — General Command, said the charge was "fabricated by the United States to pressure the Palestinian opposition, especially our group which opposes the so-called Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations."

Group lashes out at incitement

U.S. Jewish groups are obligated to speak out against recent statements by Israeli settler leaders that threatened violence against Prime Minister Ehud Barak, according to Americans for Peace Now.

"Unless mainstream groups speak up, an atmosphere of violence will prevail and provide unbalanced individuals with an excuse to act," said Debra DeLee, the group's president.

Exhibit focuses on ancients

A new exhibition at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, "The Hasmonean Palaces in Jericho: Discoveries from the Excavations," provides a glimpse into the lives of the Hasmonean Kings of Judah.

The Hasmoneans ruled before the Romans conquered the Holy Land, the last era of Jewish independence until the establishment of the State of Israel.



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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was involved in pressuring Shayeovich. Prior to Shayeovich's backtracking on Monday, Lazar issued a statement saying, "The government should not mix at all in the issues of the Jewish community, no matter what kind of issues."

Rivalry for leadership of Russian Jewry has intensified since last November when the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, a Lubavitch-dominated group with Lazar as its chief rabbi, reconstituted itself as a legal entity.

The group has had close relations with Putin, who as prime minister under the Yeltsin regime, met with the group's leaders last year and promised to support its activities. Some observers have also suggested that Putin is interested in dealing with one Jewish leadership, rather than the fractious community that now exists.

Several conflicts between the Federation and other Jewish groups have emerged recently, most notably last December when the Federation and a Shayeovich-led group clashed over the government's return of Torah scrolls that had been looted by the Nazis or confiscated by the state during the Soviet era.

After initially reaching an agreement with KEROOR, a Russian umbrella group that unites Orthodox and Reform congregations and is headed by Shayeovich, to return dozens of scrolls, the government apparently changed its mind. The government's change of heart — only 10 scrolls were transferred to KEROOR at the time — came after Lazar reportedly asked that the scrolls be transferred to the Federation.

In light of the more recent events, Shayeovich penned a letter to Putin on May 30, demanding that he not "interfere" with the internal affairs of the Jewish community.

"The president has a right to invite whomever he wants to invite, but they shouldn't make a decision about who should represent the community," the rabbi said at the news conference.

After being approached by their Russian counterparts, NCSJ and the Conference of Presidents last week issued a statement, reaffirming their support for the elected leadership of the Russian Jewish community.

Citing "disturbing reports of interference by some government officials in the selection of community leadership," the groups said they expect that the "Russian government will continue the policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Russian Jewish community." In Israel, Avraham Burg, speaker of the Knesset, also issued a sharp warning to the Putin government.

Despite the feeling among several Jewish leaders who got involved that they had been misled, Levin said it was not Shayeovich's claim alone that prompted American Jewish leaders to intervene.

His claim was the latest in a series of troubling incidents in recent months that have involved either Jews or Putin's heavy-handed style.

"This particular incident is less clear, but I'm not sure if the overall environment has changed or not," Levin said.

"You can look at this in isolation, or as part of a pattern or possible pattern. Leading up to today, it's been clear there has been an attempt by the government or those who support the government to fracture the Jewish community."

Prior to Putin's March 26 election, state-controlled television broadcast a commercial against challenger Grigory Yavlinsky which implied that Yavlinsky's Jewishness made him less Russian.

The ad also alleged that Yavlinsky had illegally accepted vast amounts of campaign funds from Goussinsky, while noting Goussinsky's dual Russian-Israeli citizenship.

Then in early May, armed federal tax police, reportedly clad in camouflage and ski masks, raided Goussinsky's Media-Most offices.

Much of his business empire is in media, including newspapers, and a national television channel that has been highly critical of Putin.

As for Jewish activists monitoring the plight of Jewish communities around the world, the case in Moscow illustrates the hazards of their job.

Even when approached by a credible source with a plausible claim, there's the chance the activists' own credibility will be tarnished in the process, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

"That's why you have to know when to speak and what to say, and which actions are appropriate for which circumstances," said Hoenlein. □

(JTA correspondent Lev Gorodetsky in Moscow contributed to this report.)

JEWISH WORLD

Judge studies supremacist case

U.S. prosecutors appear to have enough evidence to pursue the death penalty against a white supremacist accused of going on a killing spree last August, a federal judge said.

Buford Furrow Jr. is charged with killing a postal worker just hours after he allegedly wounded five people at a Jewish community center in Los Angeles. The judge said she would study the case further before ruling whether the death penalty can be sought.

Minnesota neo-Nazi charged

Minnesota's attorney general filed hate crimes charges against a neo-Nazi leader for distributing anti-Semitic fliers.

Mike Hatch took action against the local leader of the National Socialist Party of America after receiving a complaint from the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas.

The group acted after receiving calls from local Jewish businesses and community agencies.

Britain's Shoah memorial opens

British Jews praised the country's first permanent memorial to the Holocaust. The London exhibit, inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth II on Tuesday, features Holocaust-era artifacts as well as a deportation rail car and a model of a death camp. It is housed in a \$25.5 million extension of London's Imperial War Museum.

Hate crimes database created

The state of California is completing the nation's first hate crimes computer database to help identify suspects. It is expected to be up and running by October. Some 1,750 hate crimes were reported in California in 1998.

Sydney Jews to get eruv

Observant Jews in Sydney, Australia, will soon be able to carry items and push strollers on the Sabbath after a local council approved the building of an eruv, or ritual boundary, there.

The eruv is slated to be built in an area where 10 of Sydney's 18 Orthodox synagogues are located and where the beach volleyball competition in September's Olympics is scheduled to occur.

Shoah sculptor dies at 77

Leonard Baskin, an artist who created a 7-foot sculpture to commemorate the Holocaust that stands in Ann Arbor, Mich., died Saturday at the age of 77.

Baskin, the son of a rabbi, also created a bas relief for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Museum in Washington.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Peace talks: the same old thing, but with a new twist — time limits

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — We have seen and heard it all before.

A high-level U.S. official visits the Middle East during an impasse in Israeli-Palestinian talks; a hurried series of meetings with both sides; the announcement of a new venue for the negotiations.

But while there is more than a small element of *deja vu* to this week's events, there is nonetheless something new about the scenario.

When Israeli and Palestinian negotiators return to Washington next week for a new series of talks, they will have only a limited number of weeks to hammer out the details of a final peace agreement. Gone are the days when they could afford to engage in the three B's — bickering, blaming and blustering.

This time around, they will have to get it right. If they don't, it could be months before the much-vaunted window of opportunity will open again.

The two sides have already missed two deadlines for coming up with an outline of a final peace agreement. The deadline for reaching the full agreement itself — Sept. 13 — is fast approaching. In a matter of months, President Clinton — who would like nothing better than to cap his presidency with a historic Middle East accord — will be unable to provide such a legacy.

When the U.S. election campaign heats up — and after the elections as well, when there will be a new president-elect and Clinton will be a veritable lame duck — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will have trouble asking the United States to act as referee for their sparring.

To get undivided American attention, the two sides will have to wait at least until next Jan. 20, when Clinton's successor will be inaugurated. Indeed, they will have to wait even longer than that, since the next president will hardly be able to tackle the vagaries of the Middle East peace process as soon as he moves into the White House.

When U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Tuesday that the "moment of truth" for reaching a final agreement is near, she likely was referring to considerations just like these.

Indeed, Albright must have spent part of her visit to the Middle East this week reminding the two sides — if they need such reminding — that they do not have forever. She also devoted a considerable portion of her visit to narrowing the gaps in the two sides' positions to the point where a summit later this month involving Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat would be worthwhile.

Last week, during a meeting with Clinton in Portugal, Barak said there was little point in holding such a summit, given the stances of the two sides.

This must have been bad news for Clinton, given his desire to hold one more signing ceremony during his tenure at the White House. In fairness to the two sides, it is to some degree understandable why they are continuing to engage in the three B's.

Nearly seven years ago, when Israel and the Palestinians launched the Oslo peace process, they agreed to defer the most difficult issues separating them — including the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees and final borders.

As unpalatable as it may be — perhaps no less than it was seven years ago — they now have to deal with those issues.

Every day, there are reports that Israel has conceded something — or that the Palestinians are foregoing something — followed by swift condemnations by some aggrieved party and equally swift denials from one or both sides.

But there is another reason why this cannot continue much longer.

In the absence of an agreement by September, Arafat will come under pressure, perhaps irresistible, from his constituency to declare a Palestinian state.

Should he do so, when the two sides have been unable to agree on what the precise borders of such a state should be, the two sides could find themselves confronting bigger problems than they have now. □

FOCUS ON ISSUES

U.S. Jewish and Arab groups differ on fight against terrorism*By Sharon Samber*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The issue of how to protect civil liberties while fighting terrorism has opened another rift between American Jewish groups and their Muslim and Arab counterparts.

The latest clash between the two communities came with this week's release of a report by the National Commission on Terrorism that was applauded by Jewish groups, but denounced by Arab and Muslim Americans.

The disagreement over the report, issued Monday, sounds like a replay of the events that led up to the commission's inception, when the groups sparred over who should serve on the panel.

Jewish groups objected to the nomination last year of Salam Al-Marayati to the commission, accusing the Muslim Public Affairs Council leader of condoning terrorism and making statements highly critical of Israel. The nomination was withdrawn, a move Arab groups denounced as part of a campaign to exclude Arabs and Muslims from government policy-making positions.

The National Commission on Terrorism is a temporary 10-member panel set up in 1999 to evaluate America's laws, policies and practices for preventing and punishing terrorism directed at U.S. citizens. The commission had six months to complete the report, its one and only assignment, and the group is to be disbanded.

One of the major findings of the report, "Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism," is that many terrorist groups rely more on private financial support than on direct state sponsorship.

Under the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, it is a crime for anyone in the United States to provide funds or other material support to a terrorist organization.

People cannot give money to social service programs and schools run by a terrorist organization even if the money is not used for terrorist purposes. The provisions of this law are important, the commission said, but a more comprehensive approach is needed.

Among the report's recommendations:

- Any person in the United States providing funds to terrorist organizations or activities should be investigated and possibly prosecuted.

- The United States should establish a special task force of government agencies to collect information about terrorist fund-raising and coordinate investigation of money laundering, tax and fraud violations.

- The Treasury Department should create a new unit dedicated to combat terrorist fund-raising.

The recommendations show the commission recognizes the "big change in the way terrorism operates," said Stacy Burdett, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League's Government and National Affairs Office.

"The report is useful in focusing Congress on the need to respond to terrorist fund-raising among private groups," Burdett added.

But the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, a civil rights organization, said measures targeting terrorist fund-raising would restrict legitimate international charitable work and constitute an attack on First Amendment-protected political activity.

Other Arab and Muslim groups protested many parts of the report.

"If the past is any indication, all or most of these new provisions will be used to target Muslims in this country and worldwide," said Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Commissioner Juliette Kayyem, an Arab-American civil rights attorney who took Al-Marayati's place after his name was withdrawn, said she recognizes that the panel's recommendations would affect Arabs and Muslims differently than any other American group.

But she said no group in particular was targeted.

"There's no specific recommendation that should concern the Arab and Muslim community," Kayyem said.

The commission also addressed the controversial use of secret evidence against terror suspects detained in the United States. About two dozen people, most of them Arabs and Muslims, are currently held in the United States after being arrested without charge and jailed on the basis of evidence withheld from them and their attorneys.

Most Jewish groups support the use of classified evidence but call for safeguards to achieve a balance between due process and national security concerns. The issue is a somewhat awkward one for Jewish groups, which often fight for the protection of civil liberties.

Arab groups say the use of secret evidence is discriminatory, unconstitutional and violates human rights.

Legislation pending in Congress, supported by many civil rights organizations, would end the use of secret evidence in American courts.

The American Jewish Committee said at a recent hearing on the bill that a ban on use of classified information against terror suspects would hinder America's fight against terrorism.

The commission attempted to strike a balance on the issue. It recommended that the criminal prosecution of terrorists be pursued in an open court wherever possible, but if secret evidence is required for national security reasons, special attorneys who hold security clearances and unclassified summaries of the evidence should be provided to the accused.

"Resort to use of secret evidence without disclosure even to cleared counsel should be discontinued, especially when criminal prosecution through an open court proceeding is an option," the report said.

The commission noted that protections for suspects were included in the 1996 legislation that authorized the use of secret evidence, but have not been used.

The commission also said Iran and Syria should be kept on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. The report recommended that no further concessions toward Iran be made until Tehran demonstrates it has stopped supporting terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The commissioners said Iran's support for worldwide terrorism constitutes one of the foremost threats to American lives, and the report urged the U.S. not to soften its policy toward Iran in any respect.

The United States should make clear to Syria that it will continue to be considered a state sponsor of terrorism until it shuts down terrorist training camps in Syria and Lebanon and forbids the Iranian government to resupply those facilities, the report said. □