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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak, Arafat to attend summit

President Clinton announced he will host a summit with Israeli and Palestinian leaders starting next Tuesday at Camp David.

Hours after Clinton's announcement, Israeli Interior Minister Natan Sharansky said he would submit his letter of resignation at Sunday's Cabinet meeting. [Page 1]

Clinton vows to help Iranian Jews

President Clinton said he will help mobilize international leaders to push for the freedom of 10 Iranian Jews convicted Saturday of spying for Israel. [Page 3]

Diplomat linked to prostitution

Brazilian police are searching for an Israeli diplomat suspected of hosting child prostitution sessions after they found pictures of nude teen-age girls allegedly taken at his apartment. [Page 2]

Report leads JNF to launch probe

The Jewish National Fund appointed an investigator to look into an allegation that saplings planted at a site in Jerusalem were uprooted the following day. The JNF said that if the allegation reported in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* is true, the incident does not reflect the organization's policy.

4 named to museum council

The wife of 1988 U.S. presidential candidate Michael Dukakis was among four people President Clinton recently named to the body that oversees the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

In addition to Kitty Dukakis, Clinton also named Burton Resnick, chair of the board of directors of Israel Bonds; Michael Gelman, who is active in Washington's Jewish federation; and Stephen Susman, a lawyer and philanthropist living in Houston.

Goussinsky faces prosecutors

The lawyer for a Russian Jewish leader charged with fraud and embezzlement accused state prosecutors of dragging out the case to deprive their client of his freedom. The allegations came as Vladimir Goussinsky, a media tycoon, appeared before state prosecutors again. His lawyer said Goussinsky is refusing to answer the prosecutors' questions.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Clinton's law: Peace summit now, or pay for delay later with violence

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — When President Clinton announced he would host Israeli and Palestinian leaders next week at Camp David, he repeatedly sounded what might be called a "law" of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

Given the wide gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian positions, this might not be the best time for a summit. But waiting for a better time, Clinton made clear, is a worse option.

"Delay tends to make these things worse, not better," the president said at a news conference Wednesday, making one of his formulations of the "peacemaking law."

He also provided a more detailed formulation: "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as all of us have seen, knows no status quo.

"It can move forward toward real peace or it can slide back into turmoil. It will not stand still."

In Israel, however, there were indications that attempts to move forward with the peace process could also provoke turmoil.

Clinton's summit announcement prompted a rebellion in Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's coalition from hawks fearing he will concede too much to the Palestinians at the summit.

Interior Minister Natan Sharansky announced at a Jerusalem protest that he would submit his letter of resignation at Sunday's Cabinet meeting.

"The prime minister is traveling" to Camp David "without trying to make consensus here," Sharansky said.

Sharansky has repeatedly called on Barak to set "red lines" — firm boundaries on Israeli concessions — and to forge a Cabinet consensus before attending a summit.

Should Sharansky's four-member *Yisrael Ba'Aliyah* Party pull out, it would not bring down Barak's government, but it could prompt further defections by other parties — particularly the National Religious Party, which has already said it would resign if Barak does not change course.

Barak, speaking earlier in the day before Sharansky made his announcement, vowed he would continue to pursue a peace agreement even if he had only "nine ministers and a quarter of the Knesset behind me."

Clinton's "peacemaking law" was borne out by events of the past several days.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited the Middle East for a series of meetings with Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat to determine whether now would be a fruitful time for a summit.

The period from when she returned to Washington until Clinton's announcement on Wednesday was marked by uncertainty over whether the summit would indeed be held any time soon.

But public positions hardened during that period of uncertainty.

Meeting earlier this week in the Gaza Strip, the 129-member Palestinian Central Council, the so-called mini-parliament of the PLO, said Arafat would declare a Palestinian state in September if the two sides fail to achieve a final peace accord by then.

This, predictably, provoked an uproar among Israeli officials, who accused the Palestinians of making threats instead of seeking peace.

True, some members of the Palestinian Central Council were later quoted as saying

MIDEAST FOCUS

Court to hear conversions appeal

Israel's Supreme Court was scheduled to resume hearings on whether to recognize non-Orthodox conversions.

The court is considering an appeal by the state of a lower court's decision recognizing dozens of conversions performed by the Reform movement in Israel and abroad.

Panel lifts Mordechai's immunity

An Israeli parliamentary committee voted unanimously to lift the immunity of a former Cabinet minister so that sexual harassment charges could be brought against him.

At Wednesday's committee meeting, Yitzhak Mordechai welcomed the prospect of a trial, saying it would be the "only way to prove my innocence."

Israel said to plan satellite sales

Israel plans to sell intelligence gathering satellites to Singapore and Turkey, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The two deals are worth a total of \$1.2 billion, the paper said.

Report: Mossad agents angry

Agents with Israel's Mossad are angry that Israel allowed an agent to be tried in Switzerland for espionage, according to Israel Radio.

Irritated by what they perceived as Israel's unwillingness to protect one of their own, the agents are planning to refuse future missions, according to the report.

Man arrested for counterfeiting

Israeli police arrested a man for printing \$1 million in counterfeit money in a Jerusalem printing shop.

A police spokesman said there were supplies to print another \$17 million.



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that the group's statement did not mention September and that the exact date for a declaration of statehood had purposely been kept vague to give Arafat flexibility in the negotiations.

But by Wednesday, Israeli tempers were flaring.

During quick stopovers that day in London and Paris, Barak told French and British leaders that Israel would take "unilateral steps" of its own if Arafat declares an independent Palestinian state without a peace deal.

Barak, who did not elaborate on what those steps might be, also warned of possible violence if the two sides fail to reach an agreement.

This, of course, could be considered a corollary of the "peacemaking law" that Clinton elucidated later in the day at his news conference.

Even Israel's dovish justice minister, Yossi Beilin, was infuriated by what emerged from the meeting in Gaza.

"I can tell them that a Palestinian state will not be created as long as Israel does not recognize it," Beilin said.

"Even if the entire world recognizes a unilateral Palestinian state," Beilin added, it will be a state only "on paper" without Israel's recognition.

Clinton did not downplay the wide gaps separating the two sides when he announced the summit.

Lower-level "negotiators have reached an impasse," Clinton said. "Movement now depends on historic decisions that only the two leaders can make."

Indeed, the differences between the two sides extend to whether to hold the summit itself.

Barak has pushed for the summit as the last best hope for progress.

Arafat is wary of the prospect.

The Palestinian leader fears that Clinton and Barak will gang up on him at Camp David and pressure him into making concessions.

Even after Clinton announced the summit, Palestinian officials remained sour about the idea, saying the gaps are still too wide.

In the Jewish state, there were mixed predictions about what would emerge from the summit.

Cabinet minister Eli Yishai of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party agreed with the Palestinian view that the gaps are just too wide.

But Beilin was more optimistic.

He gave the summit a 50-50 chance of success. Not the best of chances, but as Clinton would say, better than trying nothing at all. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Israeli diplomat in Brazil suspected of child pornography

By Shirley Nigri

RIO DE JANEIRO (JTA) — Brazilian police were searching this week for an Israeli diplomat suspected of hosting child prostitution sessions after they found pictures of nude teen-age girls allegedly taken at his apartment.

Israeli officials said they are recalling Arie Scher to investigate the matter.

The search for Scher, 35, who served the Israeli government in China for two years before coming to Rio de Janeiro, came after George Steinberg, a local Hebrew teacher, accused Scher after police said they found pornographic videos and more than 100 pictures of young girls in compromising positions at Steinberg's house Tuesday.

Police searched Steinberg's home after a 17-year-old girl said Steinberg, 40, took a photo of her naked and posted it on an Internet site.

Scher fled his house — instead of relying on diplomatic immunity — just minutes before police searched his apartment without a warrant.

The single diplomat, who was very popular with the Jewish community, apparently took his computer with him.

The Jewish community is shocked at the alleged involvement of Steinberg in the incident, which received huge play in the Brazilian media.

Rio de Janeiro is the center of Brazil's child pornography industry. □

JEWISH WORLD

Hillel leader to head O.U. probe

The president of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is heading an independent panel to investigate how the Orthodox Union handled sexual harassment complaints.

Individuals interested in contacting the panel headed by Richard Joel can e-mail inquiry@yaho.com. Rabbi Baruch Lanner resigned from the O.U. after the New York Jewish Week published an article in which numerous people said Lanner had harassed or molested them when they were teens.

U.S. ship once in Hitler's navy

The U.S. ship that led the flotilla for New York's Op Sail 2000 was originally part of Hitler's navy. The Eagle, which now serves as an American training vessel, was taken as war booty after World War II.

Annan pays tribute to Wallenberg

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his wife, Nane, paid tribute to Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. Nane Lagergren is the niece of Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II.

Austrian firms asked to join fund

Austria asked the country's 1,000 largest companies to contribute to a compensation fund for Holocaust-era slave laborers. Maria Schumayer, who is handling the issue for the government, said Wednesday she had sent a letter asking firms with more than 250 employees to join the fund.

Swiss bill focuses on accounts

The Swiss Cabinet unveiled legislation that would force banks to actively search for customers whose accounts are dormant for eight years.

The bill, which would also force the banks to turn accounts that lie dormant for 50 years over to the state, is the direct result of an international uproar over how Swiss banks handled Holocaust-era dormant accounts.

Former JTA writer dead at 86

Haskell Cohen, a longtime sports columnist for JTA, died June 29 at the age of 86.

Among the subjects Cohen covered for JTA in the 1970s and 1980s included America's oldest living Olympic athlete and the paucity of foreign Jewish players on Israeli basketball teams.

Cohen, who is widely credited with coming up with the idea for the NBA All-Star Game, was also the president of the organization that sponsors U.S. participation in Israel's Maccabiah Games.

Clinton promises to help 10 convicted Iranian Jews

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — President Clinton has reassured American Jewish leaders and a handful of relatives of the 10 Iranian Jews convicted of spying for Israel that his administration will continue to push for the convicted Jews' freedom.

The delegation discussed possible ways Wednesday of pressuring Iranian hard-liners in advance of the appeals process for the imprisoned Jews. No announcement has yet been made as to when the appeals will be heard.

The Iranian Jews were sentenced Saturday to prison terms ranging from four to 13 years. Three Jews were acquitted.

Two Muslim men were also convicted and sentenced to two years, while two other Muslim men were freed.

A 16-member delegation met for one hour at the White House with Clinton, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger.

The group expressed its concern over the fate of the 10 imprisoned Jews, the condition of the remaining 25,000 Jews in Iran and possible sanctions.

Clinton "displayed real compassion and depth of knowledge of the issues," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which coordinated the visit.

"He said the sentences were unjust, and that he is committed to mobilizing international support to gain their release."

The president was particularly interested in hearing from the seven Iranian visitors to the White House — from New York, Los Angeles and Baltimore — who are related to three of the Jewish prisoners, Hoenlein said.

The relatives "communicated their concerns for the individuals and for the rest of the community," he said. They also told Clinton "how grateful they are for his ongoing support."

Jewish leaders have proposed a range of sanctions against Iran, but Hoenlein declined to comment on what kinds were discussed at the White House meeting.

Most pressing is an effort to block the visit to Germany next week of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

Jewish leaders and some members of Congress have also discussed repealing the recent easing of sanctions on Iranian luxury goods.

In April, the United States rewarded the small strides made by Iranian reformers by permitting the import of caviar, dried fruit, pistachios and Persian carpets.

At the same time, sanctions remained in place against Iran's far more lucrative oil industry.

Jewish leaders said sanctions are a delicate balancing act, fraught with the risk of unintended consequences.

While sanctions may provide an outlet for venting frustration with Iran, they say, there is also the specter that sanctions could paradoxically help Iranian hard-liners, who would presumably seize any action against Iran as a chance to whip up anti-American and anti-Israeli fervor within society.

Not only would sanctions strengthen the hard-liners' hand, but they might also debilitate their fledgling moderate opponents and make life even worse for Iranian Jews, as the community could be scapegoated.

However, the position of at least one Jewish lawmaker is clear.

"Reimposing this embargo is the most powerful message the U.S. can send because it shows not only that we are concerned about human rights, but that we are not willing to go forward and do business as usual," Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) told JTA this week.

"And that is a far more telling message than to say that we are concerned with human rights but to continue with the recent unilateral trade concessions, where we are letting their goods in, they of course don't take any of ours, and they don't change their behavior." □

Russian Jews who want to stay say they appreciate homeland

By Michael J. Jordan

MOSCOW (JTA) — On a recent Friday night in Moscow, nearly two dozen university students and graduates gathered in a cramped room lit by two tungsten bulbs. Posters and artists' renderings of Israel lined the walls.

These Russian Jews sat around a small table laid with candles, a Kiddush cup and two jars of Rokeach grape juice. Alternating between Russian and Hebrew, the group debated. They prayed. They sang. Some louder than others, some off-key, some unsure of the words.

More important, though, was their mere presence here for another Kabbalat Shabbat at the local Hillel.

Undaunted by the controversies that are roiling Russian Jewry, they have not returned their Jewishness back into the closet.

Indeed, this group's continuation of a relatively new tradition reassures that even as doomsayers and realists predict another surge in Jewish emigration to Israel and to the West, Jewish life in Russia is slowly but surely bouncing back.

Despite the fact almost 1 million Jews from the former Soviet Union have already emigrated to Israel in the past decade, another 600,000 or so remain in Russia.

Some American Jews, upon hearing of Russia's endemic anti-Semitism and economic instability, may wonder: why stay?

"Here, I feel myself more Jewish than anywhere," said a young woman named Mila.

"In Israel, I think they take their Jewishness for granted. But here, I appreciate it more. It's richer, more cultural, more interesting. There's more of a hunger for traditional things that we couldn't do during Soviet times."

Jews in Russia are not masochists, they say, though Jews here and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe are clearly conditioned to accept a higher degree of popular anti-Semitism than in the West.

Comments on the streets that might make an American Jew's hair stand on end are often shrugged off by Jews in this part of the world as par for the course.

If anything, the fact so many Russian Jews remain seems to speak volumes about how "Russian" many of them feel contrary to the stereotype of the Jew with "divided" loyalties. They feel deeply rooted within Russia's rich cultural heritage, and to its language, music and literature.

"I love this country because I was born here and feel like a part of this society," said a young woman at the Hillel event named Anya.

"My father, who is 100 percent Jewish, has always told me that I'm a citizen of this country, and that I should live and serve this country. I actually feel more Russian than Jewish."

Patriotism aside, emotional bonds to the land of their forefathers only go so far.

Jews say there are many personal and logistical reasons for why they stay. For most, there is the unpalatable notion of enormous upheaval and transition any move entails, plus separation from friends and perhaps family.

In a crude breakdown of other reasons, observers say the elderly generally feel too old to uproot themselves and then live out

their remaining years in an alien culture. Their children are often compelled to stay and look after them.

The middle-aged are also typically well-established in their careers. Plenty of horror stories circulated in Russia earlier this decade of proud Jewish scientists reduced to sweeping streets in Israel. Overall, though, this hasn't deterred too many Jews from leaving.

Since the early 1960s, some 1.3 million Jews from the former Soviet Union have emigrated, primarily to Israel or the United States, according to a recent book called "A Second Exodus."

Jewish emigration has increased greatly since the parting of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

Israel has already received roughly 820,000 immigrants from the 16 former republics of the Soviet Union, according to the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Roughly 185,000 emigrated there in 1990, tapering off to 46,000 in 1998. However, with economic fears on the rise in Russia, the numbers of immigrants from the region to Israel leapt to 66,000 last year, a significant influx for a country of only 6 million.

As for the younger generation of Jews who remain in Russia, they speak of exciting opportunities for the young, intelligent and ambitious — a category into which many of them seem to fall.

"I see a future for myself here," said a young woman at Hillel named Sasha.

For others, public backlash from the arrest of the president of the Russian Jewish Congress, Vladimir Goussinsky, and the very public showdown between rival Jewish factions may serve as greater impetus for pulling the plug on their lives in Russia. Both controversies, they suspect, were somehow orchestrated by officials within the Kremlin, perhaps even Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Several of those at the Hillel event declined to give their last names, due to a lingering fear of persecution by secret police.

The future is still so uncertain that Mila, who speaks as if thoroughly content with her life in Russia, later added that she would not allow history to repeat itself and let her family be trapped as a persecuted minority within a closed, oppressive regime.

In fact, some observers suggest that a policy of anti-Semitism may already be under way.

The national television network, widely seen as the unofficial mouthpiece of the state, is said to be fomenting anti-Semitism through its blistering attacks on Goussinsky, a highly visible Jew and dual Russian-Israeli citizen.

At the same time, if Putin were to successfully shut down Goussinsky's media, which has been outspoken in defense of human rights and against anti-Semitism, it could be interpreted as a de facto official policy on these matters.

In the event of a larger than normal exodus, American Jewry would again need to be mobilized, both financially and politically, say Jewish officials.

With these concurrent controversies in Russia, it would not surprise American veterans of the earlier refusenik campaign if Jews again start pouring out.

"I don't think the final chapter of the exodus of Russian Jews has yet been written," said Malcolm Hoenlein, the executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. □