



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinton draws deadline

President Clinton said he intends to reach an agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat before he leaves Wednesday for the G8 summit in Japan.

Earlier, Israeli Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg said he does not think it is possible to reach such an agreement before Wednesday.

Burg said Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at Camp David have never been closer.

But he added that large gaps remain on key issues like Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, Clinton was quoted in the *New York Daily News* as saying the Camp David negotiations are the "hardest thing I've ever seen."

Slave labor fund signed

Germany joined other nations at a historic signing ceremony creating a \$5.2 billion fund for Holocaust-era slave and forced laborers.

Among the signers were U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat and representatives from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Czech Republic.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer called the fund's creation "above all a gesture of moral responsibility" toward Nazi victims. [Page 3]

Shul attackers plead guilty

Five skinheads face up to 40 years in prison after pleading guilty to charges they tried to firebomb a Reno, Nev., synagogue in November of last year. [Page 4]

Argentine leader defends policy

Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa said his government is doing everything it can to solve a July 18, 1994, car-bombing at a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 86 people.

De la Rúa was responding to criticism by Memoria Activa, an organization of victims' relatives, which charged Monday that he has not kept his promise to find those responsible.

A trial in the case, mainly of former police officers and a used-car dealer who allegedly were paid by terrorists to obtain the vehicle used in the attack, is scheduled to begin after Jan. 1.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Would U.S. Jewry lobby hard for an Israeli-Palestinian deal?

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — If Palestinian and Israeli negotiators succeed in forging peace at Camp David, it's all but certain that tens of billions of American tax dollars would be needed to underpin such an agreement.

And in cajoling the U.S. Congress to loosen the purse strings, no group would be more vital than the leading American pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

No one doubts that AIPAC would "be there" on behalf of a peace deal, despite deep reservations from some corners within the organization.

"There would be initial sticker shock — 'I can't believe they're giving up this, I can't believe they're giving up that,'" said a Jewish official familiar with AIPAC.

"But most people would swallow hard, sit back and realize that if Barak, with the credibility as Israel's greatest warrior, says this will enhance Israel's long-term security, the community will respond and rally behind him."

However, some now wonder — in light of a recent open letter critical of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak signed by several Jewish leaders affiliated with AIPAC — what degree of enthusiasm its lobbyists would demonstrate.

AIPAC, after all, mirrors American Jewry itself. Its 463-member executive committee spans the political spectrum of Jewish groups and individuals, and, therefore, encompasses the wide range of American Jewish opinion on how best to achieve peace in the Middle East and guarantee security for the Jewish state.

With Barak so driven in his quest for peace, a number of U.S. Jewish groups and officials have expressed concern that Barak is prepared to breach several "red lines" drawn by previous Israeli leaders on such issues as the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, national borders and Jewish settlements.

Nowhere were these divisions so evident as in a series of recent newspaper ads.

One, spearheaded by the Zionist Organization of America, featured an open letter to Barak criticizing the prime minister for appearing to concede too much in peace negotiations. The letter, signed by 30 leading American Jewish figures, was published throughout Israel, in *The New York Times* and in several U.S. Jewish papers.

Another full-page ad, which appeared in *The New York Times* on July 12, the first full day of the summit, and in Jewish papers, was sponsored by the Israel Policy Forum, a group that promotes the peace process.

This open letter to Barak, which carried 384 signatures, stated that "the overwhelming majority of American Jews support this peace initiative."

A third letter appeared in *The Washington Post* to welcome Barak to the Camp David summit. Sponsored by the 54-member Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, it carried the names of only 36 members.

Several did not sign, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, because "they didn't want to."

AIPAC, a member of the Conference of Presidents, itself appeared as a signatory on the third letter, but AIPAC-affiliated individuals were also signatories to the first two dueling letters.

AIPAC's skittishness over the issue was highlighted when it demanded the resignation of its executive committee chairman, Gerald Charnoff, for signing the ZOA-sponsored letter. Charnoff was the most prominent of the eight current or past AIPAC

MIDEAST FOCUS

Court to review prayer decision

Israel's High Court of Justice agreed to reconsider its recent decision allowing the Women of the Wall group to hold services at the Western Wall.

The decision, which also allowed the women to read aloud from the Torah and wear prayer shawls at the Wall, had prompted an outcry from fervently Orthodox politicians.

Barak may allow refugee return

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is considering recognizing a U.N. Security Council resolution that recognizes the right of Palestinians to return to homes they abandoned during the 1948 War of Independence.

According to the prime minister's advisers, the Israeli leader believes the U.N. resolution does not hold Israel responsible for the refugee problem but allows for the return of some refugees for family reunification.

Lawmakers rally for 'Iran 10'

U.S. legislators joined Jewish groups at a rally in Washington in support of 10 Iranian Jews recently sentenced for spying for Israel.

Among the participants at Monday's rally was Edward Walker, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, who said the United States would continue its "unceasing efforts" to seek justice for the 10 Jews.

U.S. criticizes Iran on test

Iran's test over the weekend of a medium-range missile capable of reaching Israel is a "serious threat to the region and to U.S. nonproliferation interests," the State Department said.

Spokesman Philip Reeker said Monday that the United States has tried for years to prevent the transfer of missile technology and equipment to the Islamic state.

committee members who signed the letter. He was, however, allowed to remain on the executive committee.

Charnoff's link with AIPAC was not mentioned in the ZOA letter. But there was concern that officials in Washington and Jerusalem would connect the dots, tarnishing AIPAC's reputation despite the fact that only a handful of its executive committee members had signed on.

More than two dozen members of AIPAC's executive committee signed the IPF-sponsored letter supporting Barak's efforts. For their part, AIPAC officials insist the lobby — consistently ranked as one of the most influential on Capitol Hill — would lead the charge for a financial aid package to secure peace.

"AIPAC's record in supporting the peace process is clear and unambiguous, and we are very proud of it," AIPAC spokesman Kenneth Bricker told JTA.

"We completely understand the magnitude and significance of what might be achieved at Camp David."

Bricker declined to elaborate. Due to AIPAC's strict media policy, several members of the executive committee declined to comment.

However, the ZOA letter did raise important questions about AIPAC: If there is internal unease with a Camp David deal that relinquishes more than expected, how would that unease affect the timing and style of AIPAC's lobbying campaign?

Some observers think that support among AIPAC's board — and intensified AIPAC activity on behalf of a financial aid package — would come only after the Israeli public gave its stamp of approval in a referendum, which has been promised by Barak.

Israeli rejection by referendum would render AIPAC's lobbying moot.

If Barak were to succeed with a peace agreement, it would inevitably fall to AIPAC and its allies to explain Barak's vision to the 535 members of the U.S. Congress.

AIPAC, which has often been a driving force in securing U.S. foreign aid to Israel and others, would have to convince members of Congress, many of whom are wary of foreign aid expenditures, of the need for billions more in aid for Israeli security measures, Palestinian statehood and refugees. For now, observers say, AIPAC's professional staff is laying the groundwork for any peace deal-related lobbying, clarifying Israeli positions and making plain the need for financial aid.

After the deal, AIPAC would be expected to present a united, nonpartisan front. Internal concerns would be expressed privately, or directly with the Israelis.

Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israel's minister for Diaspora affairs, said in an interview last week from Camp David that he senses widespread Jewish support for Barak initiatives and that if and when the time comes, "I expect there will be unilateral support for the financial aid we need" from AIPAC.

Still, reaching consensus within AIPAC might become a messy affair. Some predict the executive committee might experience mass resignations.

"AIPAC is a divided board," said the ZOA's Klein, who describes himself as one of the more active members of the AIPAC board.

"I would say a third to one-half of the activists are dismayed — that's the word they use with me — with what Barak is ready to give away. I regularly hear things like, 'I've fought my whole life to strengthen Israel, and now I see everything I've done torn apart.'"

Klein revealed last week that he was among a crowd of 100 American Jewish activists who met in New York, invited by a visiting group of Israelis, to discuss strategies for lobbying against the sort of deal Barak would likely make, including lobbying against U.S. financial aid.

Israeli leaders, some say, traditionally tend to take U.S. Jewry's support for granted and have not done enough to inform and educate Jews here about the peace process. If such steps were taken, they say, it could exert more influence on Washington.

"AIPAC will continue to explain the Israeli position forcefully and effectively," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. But Barak, he added, "will need to explain clearly to the American Jewish community why the peace process, and the peace agreement he is signing, is indispensable for the security of Israel, and why every other possibility is fraught with almost guaranteed disaster." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Orphan arrives in Israel

A Jewish orphan rescued from the Chechen war by the Jewish Agency for Israel was scheduled to arrive in Israel on Tuesday.

The orphan known only as Natasha, along with 44 other children and 10 caregivers from her orphanage, will receive four months of rest and rehabilitation at an Israeli youth village run by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

Settler funder blamed in report

A report released by a California state legislator charges that a major funder of settler activities on the West Bank conspired with a public agency to operate an illegally financed casino.

The report released by Assemblyman Scott Wildman also recommends that Dr. Irving Moskowitz be investigated for possible criminal and corrupt activities and that he be required to return \$12 million in public funds.

France honors Jewish victims

France held a national memorial day honoring the tens of thousands of Jews who suffered at the hands of the French state during World War II.

Sunday's national day of recognition, approved by the French Parliament in February, also honored those who protected Jews during the Vichy government's collaboration with the Nazis.

French Jewish leader Henri Hajdenberg applauded the government's willingness to acknowledge the nation's wartime past.

Dutch agree to pay \$325 million

The Dutch government, banks, insurance companies and stock exchange agreed to pay some \$325 million to pay for property and assets looted from Jews during World War II.

Rob Wurms, chairman of the Central Jewish Board of the Netherlands, said he hopes the agreement, which came after long and difficult negotiations, "will contribute to a certain feeling of healing."

Oxford hosts Shoah forum

More than 600 scholars are attending a Holocaust conference in Oxford, England.

Attendees include Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and American academic Deborah Lipstadt, who recently won a libel suit brought against her by Holocaust denier David Irving.

In his remarks, Wiesel was critical of "good people who worry that the Holocaust has overshadowed" other aspects of Jewish life.

"The danger is not from Christians now. The danger is from those who deny the truth of our commitment," he said.

Slave laborers step closer to German money, apology

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — Holocaust-era slave and forced laborers are a step closer toward receiving payments, but Jewish leaders are reserving their applause.

"Slave laborers are dying every day," Rabbi Israel Miller, the president of the Claims Conference, said Monday after Germany joined other nations at a signing ceremony in Berlin creating an approximately \$5.2 billion fund for the laborers.

"Our obligation is to reach them so that they will see some benefit in their lifetime."

The ceremony cleared the way for the applications process to start before the end of the year, according to Alissa Kaplan, spokeswoman for the Claims Conference.

She said the group has already begun the "massive undertaking" of readying itself for the applications and payment process.

With an eye toward getting "payments out as quickly and efficiently as possible," Kaplan said the Claims Conference has already hired personnel, generated lists of likely recipients and set up phone banks to deal with an expected flood of inquiries.

According to Kaplan, each payment to a former laborer will be accompanied by an apology from Germany.

Monday's agreement, which also gave German companies protection from class-action lawsuits in the United States, came nearly seven months after the German government and representatives of German industry announced that they would create the fund, with each contributing half. The ensuing months have witnessed disagreements about how the funds will be distributed and how to give the German firms the legal protection they seek in return for their contributions.

While welcoming the signing, the Claims Conference, which was among the groups negotiating on behalf of the laborers, is keenly aware that time works against the aging survivor population. "None of this means anything if we don't help the survivors," said Gideon Taylor, the group's executive vice president. "This is not about political glory. We have to deal with getting payments to the people who really count."

Among the signers at Monday's ceremony in Berlin was U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, who represented the United States in the negotiations. Also participating were representatives from the Claims Conference, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Czech Republic, all of which will distribute a portion of the fund.

At Monday's signing ceremony, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer called the fund's creation "above all a gesture of moral responsibility" toward Nazi victims.

Jewish leaders have long stressed that their efforts were focused on achieving justice — not simply on Jews getting more money.

Only about 30 percent of the fund will go to Jews or Jewish causes.

Jews are receiving a smaller piece of the pie because there are fewer living slave laborers, most of whom are Jewish, than forced laborers, who are non-Jewish.

Nazi policies account for the sharply different proportion of survivors from these two groups. The slave laborers were concentration camp prisoners whom the Nazis sought to work to death. The forced laborers, imported from Eastern European nations to free up Germans to serve in the army, worked under better conditions than the slave laborers.

Under the terms of an allocation agreement reached in March, some 240,000 slave laborers — about 140,000 of whom are Jewish — will receive up to \$7,500 each. More than 1 million forced laborers will get up to \$2,500 each.

The allocation agreement reached in March includes the following distributions:

- \$906 million to Poland; \$862 million to Ukraine; \$417.5 million to Russia; \$347 million to Belarus; and \$211.5 million to the Czech Republic. Jews living in these countries are expected to get payments from these allocations;

- The Claims Conference will get about \$906 million for distribution outside the above five countries;

- \$500 million for property claims, including looted bank accounts and unpaid insurance policies;

- \$350 million for a foundation to sponsor research and educational projects on Nazi labor policies. □

Skinheads face up to 40 years in attempted Reno shul attack

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Five skinheads could spend decades in prison after pleading guilty to charges they tried to firebomb a Nevada synagogue last year.

Five young men, aged 19 to 25, attempted to torch Temple Emanu-El in Reno on Nov. 30, 1999.

They initially shattered a temple window by throwing a plastic bottle filled with concrete, and followed up with a Molotov cocktail. However, the gasoline bomb fell short and burned only the sidewalk.

Of the five skinheads, four pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy against the rights of citizens; damage to religious property, which is a hate crime; and use of fire or explosives to commit a felony.

They face up to 40 years in jail.

One defendant, the youngest, pleaded guilty to lesser charges. His maximum sentence is 35 years.

Two juvenile girls involved in the case have been committed to the state's youth correctional facility.

A sentencing hearing for the five skinheads is scheduled for Oct. 30.

A group of Jewish Defense League members from Los Angeles arrived last week in Reno with the intention of burning Nazi and Confederate flags in front of the federal building in Reno to protest the skinheads.

Even though the guilty pleas were made the night before the trial, the flag burning proceeded as planned to call attention, said JDL leader Irv Rubin, to "the cancer of racial hatred."

Across the street from the federal building, six self-declared white supremacists unfurled Confederate and Nazi flags and raised their arms in the Nazi salute.

The two sides exchanged obscenities, but there was no violence or arrests, according to the Reno Gazette-Journal newspaper.

Rabbi Avraham Keller of Temple Emanu-El said that the guilty pleas had brought closure to the incident, but he was critical of the JDL.

The flag-burning "was not a way to convey a message," Keller said. "The JDL doesn't represent the Jewish community or members of the Jewish community who live here." □

OBITUARY

World pays tribute to Polish hero who told skeptical West of Shoah

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Jan Karski, a World War II Polish Resistance hero who tried to convince Allied leaders of the horrors of the Holocaust, died July 13 in Washington at the age of 86.

Jews and non-Jews alike paid tribute to a man whose wartime heroism and lifelong commitment to justice made him a moral authority in the fight against intolerance and anti-Semitism.

"To remember Karski is to remember the very best that human beings were capable of at the awful heart of this awful century,"

said Gratz College professor Michael Steinlauf, an expert on Polish Jewish history.

"He had zero tolerance for any sort of hypocrisy, and no matter who his audience was, he stood before it ramrod straight and never hesitated for an instant to speak the truth as he knew it, no matter how hard, no matter how inconvenient."

In Warsaw, Rabbi Michael Schudrich led a prayer in his memory during Shabbat services.

"Karski was an absolutely righteous man," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a member of the board of the Union of Polish Jewish Congregations.

"His unbelievable World War II record made him a great moral authority in Poland. He represented the best face of Poland, and it was clear that his views, such as his alertness to anti-Semitism, were against the mainstream. There is no way to replace him."

Born Jan Kozielski in 1914 in the central Polish city of Lodz, Karski, a Roman Catholic, was a diplomat in prewar Poland. After the war broke out in 1939, he joined the underground Home Army.

Thanks to his courage, his photographic memory and his talent with languages, he became a legendary courier, sneaking through enemy lines and occupied Europe to bring news from the Resistance to Poland's government in exile.

He was captured and tortured by the Gestapo in 1940, but managed to escape with the help of an underground commando team.

In 1942, he risked his life to sneak twice into the Warsaw Ghetto.

Also, disguised as a Nazi guard, he infiltrated the Izbica death camp in eastern Poland, where he saw Jews tortured, stabbed and crammed into boxcars.

He managed to bring his graphic eyewitness report of executions, mass deportations and horrific conditions to the West, and personally briefed President Roosevelt and other western leaders.

His reports, however, resulted in little concrete action from skeptical Allied leaders.

"Maybe they did not believe, maybe they thought I was exaggerating," Karski told The Associated Press in 1995.

"Jan Karski tried to inform [the world] about the Holocaust, but the world failed to consider his warnings seriously," said a statement from the Polish embassy in Washington.

Karski's 1944 book, "Story of a Secret State," which detailed the Polish resistance fight, recounted his exploits, and also described the realities of the Holocaust, became a best-seller in the United States.

Karski refused to return to Poland after the Communists took power. He settled in the United States, becoming a naturalized citizen in 1954 and a professor at Georgetown University.

The first time he spoke publicly after the war about what he saw in the Warsaw Ghetto and Izbica camp was when he was interviewed in the 1980s for Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah."

He returned to Poland only after the fall of communism in 1989.

Among many awards, he was recognized as Righteous Among Nations, and also was granted Poland's highest civilian and military honors.

Karski's late wife was the daughter of an Orthodox Polish Jew and lost all her family in the Holocaust. □