



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 135

Wednesday, July 19, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Summit's progress disputed

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at Camp David are moving closer toward "an understanding" on the status of Jerusalem, according to an Israeli source.

Under the evolving deal, the source said, Jerusalem's borders would be expanded to include several Jewish settlements in the West Bank, while the Palestinians would gain control over neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials are claiming that no progress is being made.

House passes AMIA resolution

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution Monday night urging Argentina to pursue its investigation into the 1994 car-bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in Buenos Aires.

B'nai B'rith International urged the U.S. Senate to consider a similar resolution.

In Buenos Aires, thousands of people dogged the streets surrounding the AMIA community center on Tuesday, the sixth anniversary of the attack, which killed 86 people and wounded some 300 others.

President Fernando de la Rúa, who attended the ceremony, later said he came "to share in the grief caused by this tragedy."

Jewish groups plan fast and vigil

Several Jewish organizations are planning a fast and vigil this week to focus attention on three issues: nuclear disarmament, poverty and the death penalty.

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Federations back pluralism plan

The rabbi of a Conservative synagogue in Jerusalem that was torched in June is touring the United States to raise money for a project promoting pluralism.

American-born Rabbi David Bateman said Kehilat Ya'ar Ramot has received approximately \$40,000 in financial commitments from Jewish federations in Washington, Chicago and MetroWest, N.J., to create a think tank that would bring together all of Judaism's religious streams.

Many observers suspect that fervently Orthodox extremists were responsible for the fire at the 100-family congregation.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Clinton team's damage control confirms importance of Jewish vote

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — The ongoing flap over an anti-Semitic epithet allegedly hurled by Hillary Rodham Clinton 26 years ago lays bare two essential facts about the U.S. Senate hopeful and her relations with New York's Jews.

First, many among the 1.7 million Jews in the state continue to harbor concerns about the first lady's stance on issues most personal to them — issues such as Israel, the Palestinians, school vouchers and convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

Second, the Clinton team's strenuous denial of the alleged remark seems to acknowledge that she has yet to assuage these concerns.

It is conventional wisdom that Clinton must win a lion's share of New York Jews — some analysts say as much as 80 percent — to capture a seat in the U.S. Senate.

Jews constitute 9 percent of the state's population, and generally from 8 to 15 percent of voter turnout, making the "Jewish vote" vital.

According to pollster John Zogby, Jewish support for Clinton has fluctuated from a low of 43 percent to close to 60 percent. As of June, she held a 58 to 32 percent Jewish advantage over her opponent, Rick Lazio, a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"The nature of the Jewish vote is such that Jewish voters are an important swing constituency in New York state and often make a difference in close elections," said Michael Miller, executive vice president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, an umbrella organization of 60 Jewish groups.

And neither Democrats nor Republicans can take that Jewish vote for granted.

Miller noted, for example, that while 78 percent of New York City's 1 million-plus Jews voted for President Clinton in 1996, the next year 76 percent backed Republican Rudolph Giuliani for mayor.

Giuliani was Hillary Clinton's opponent in the Senate race before he withdrew in May after announcing he is suffering from prostate cancer.

This week's brouhaha began with reports about a new book, "State of a Union: Inside the Complex Marriage of Bill and Hillary Clinton," by former National Enquirer reporter Jerry Oppenheimer.

Oppenheimer's book says Clinton called Paul Fray, her husband's then-campaign manager, a "Jew bastard" after Bill Clinton lost his race for Congress in 1974.

As soon as reports of the alleged remark began circulating over the weekend, the Senate hopeful took the unusual step of calling a news conference at her Westchester county home on Sunday to deny she ever said such a thing.

"I have spent a lifetime devoted to increasing tolerance. This never happened," she said, with a Jewish congresswoman, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), by her side.

Her husband also weighed in, telling the New York Daily News, "My wife has never, ever uttered an ethnic or racial slur against anybody, ever."

Clinton's press secretary, Howard Wolfson, further sought to quell the damage, making an appearance at an anti-Clinton event outside her Manhattan campaign office on Monday. At an event billed as "'Jew Bastards' To Hold Press Conference Today," a small group of Jews vehemently criticized her more for past actions they deemed offensive to Jewish and Israeli interests.

The handful of speakers — whose most prominent member was Brooklyn Assemblyman Dov Hikind, a Democrat who represents several Orthodox Jewish

MIDEAST FOCUS

Summit participant challenged

Israel's High Court of Justice considered petitions filed by opposition legislators challenging the involvement of private businesspeople in the peace talks at Camp David.

The court gave Prime Minister Ehud Barak five days to explain why the involvement of Yossi Ginossar, who has business dealings with the Palestinian Authority, is not a conflict of interest.

Minister's relative died in Shoah

The Czech Republic's foreign minister discovered his grandmother's name on a list of Nazi death camp victims while visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

Jan Kavan, whose Jewish father changed his name from Kohen, surprised his tour guides when he told them he lost family members during the Holocaust.

A search of Yad Vashem's database turned up his grandmother's name and listed her place of death as Buchenwald.

Knesset to vote on new elections

Israel's Knesset will hold preliminary votes in two weeks on two bills calling for the dissolution of Parliament and holding early elections.

The Knesset recently defeated a similar bill, but Speaker Avraham Burg approved holding the votes after legal advisers said that in light of the changed political circumstances in Israel, the Knesset regulations requiring a six-month waiting period could be waived.

Professor threw stones at Israel

A Palestinian intellectual who is a professor of literature at Columbia University admitted he threw stones at Israel's border fence from Lebanon earlier this month. Edward Said said he was indulging in a harmless act of joy.

neighborhoods and has been critical of Hillary Clinton in the past — appeared at lunchtime before a crowd of reporters and dozens of television cameras.

Hikind told reporters that Clinton is not an anti-Semite and said she had visited him following his father's death several months ago.

However, he said, "I'm very concerned about her record."

When Wolfson took the microphone at the end of the rally — at the request of reporters — he said most New York Jews support both Clintons and the peace process.

"It's unfortunate that people would lie about something like this," he said of the allegations, adding, "Most New Yorkers will see this for the garbage that it is."

Observers say Clinton's efforts at damage control further reaffirms the importance she places on the Jewish vote.

Given the weight of that Jewish vote, some observers say it oversimplifies the controversy to chalk up it up to the work of a muckraking media or a "vast right-wing conspiracy" — to which the first lady once famously ascribed her husband's troubles.

"The Clinton campaign and the media understand this hits upon a very deep nerve," said Dr. Mandell Ganchrow, president of the Orthodox Union.

"Although I don't know anyone in our community who can ascertain the veracity of this statement, it arouses within our consciousness the issues that we discussed not too long ago, like her reaction when Ms. Arafat claimed the Israelis poisoned the air, the water and the food of Palestinian children."

Ganchrow was referring to Clinton's November 1999 visit to the West Bank with Suha Arafat, the wife of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Clinton was denounced for not immediately criticizing Suha Arafat after the latter disclosed her belief in the Palestinian-poisoning conspiracy theory.

Clinton criticized the speech only after she returned to the United States.

It wasn't the first time she riled some segments of American Jewry.

In 1998, Clinton drew howls of protests for saying she supported the creation of a Palestinian state. She was later forced to revise her position, bringing it in line with American foreign policy, which states the issue is up to Israelis and Palestinians to decide. Concern over these issues led to a series of closed-door meetings with Jewish organizational officials, including one with Ganchrow's group.

In that December 1999 meeting, she reportedly assured an O.U. audience that she supported vouchers, or tuition tax credits, for students who attend parochial school. The O.U. supports the use of vouchers. A Clinton spokesperson said her views were more in line with the United Federation of Teachers, which opposes such credits.

Then in January, at a speech before an African American audience, she reportedly failed to condemn anti-Semitic comments made by a fiery preacher who had preceded her on stage. There were, however, a number of leading New York Jewish politicians who also did not speak out.

Finally, some Jews have chastised Clinton for enjoying too-close relations with and accepting donations from Arab Americans.

Clinton supporters say she is not given credit for the positive things she has done, such as visiting Holocaust sites in Poland, denouncing New York's Independence Party for anti-Semitic activists within its ranks, or the scores of Jewish events and activities to which she has lent her support. Rather, these are seen as "pandering" to the Jews.

All of which illustrates how polarizing Clinton and her husband are.

Some observers suggest that the electorate generally breaks down into pro-Hillary and anti-Hillary camps, and that the damage control mounted by the Clinton team would not have much effect.

"I've never seen such an intensity in an election. Either people like Clinton or they hate her," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, which immediately came to her defense with a statement Monday accepting her denial.

"If you don't like her policy regarding the Middle East, say it, but to accuse her of anti-Semitism is reprehensible," said Foxman, whose organization received a couple dozen phone calls Tuesday assailing its statement.

"Even under the worst of circumstances — if she said it — one act does not an anti-Semite make. Over the past 25 years, she's shown just the opposite — a sensitivity, caring and building of relationships with Jews." □

(JTA staff writer Julie Wiener contributed to this report.)



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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JEWISH WORLD

Poll: U.S. voters back statehood

Most U.S. voters support an independent Palestinian state, according to a Zogby International poll.

The survey, commissioned by the Arab American Institute and released Tuesday, also found that 74 percent of the respondents believe Palestinian refugees have a right to return to Israel, and 63 percent believe President Clinton has handled the Middle East peace process well.

Liechtenstein to confront past

Liechtenstein is ready to hold talks with the World Jewish Congress about paying compensation for its wartime actions, a spokeswoman for the European principality told JTA.

The statement came after a Swiss newspaper charged that Liechtenstein was sympathetic to the Nazi regime and helped Nazi officials smuggle money and artworks looted from European Jews.

Treaty could lead to Nazi trial

Latvia and Australia signed an extradition treaty, clearing a major obstacle to deporting suspected Nazi war criminal Konrad Kalejs, now a resident of Melbourne, Australia.

The treaty requires approval by Latvian legislators.

Group lauded for aiding Catholics

The U.S. Department of Education commended a Jewish organization for being one of the few groups to come to the aid of a Catholic group 75 years ago.

The American Jewish Committee was the only Jewish organization to file a court brief on behalf of the Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in its successful 1925 Supreme Court appeal challenging an Oregon law that imposed criminal penalties on parents who failed to send their children to public school.

Neo-Nazis plan election run

A Lithuanian neo-Nazi party plans to run in the nation's legislative elections this fall even though officials at the Justice Ministry refused to register the party last week, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry. Despite the ministry's decision, the leader of the National Socialist Party of Lithuania said the party is planning to put forward 10 candidates.

Actor tours Israeli playground

Actor Kirk Douglas visited a playground he financed for children in eastern Jerusalem.

Douglas, 83, who has become increasingly interested in his Jewish identity in recent years, also received a lifetime achievement award at Jerusalem's film festival last week.

World Jewish Congress, bank fail to cut deal on WWII assets

By Brian Seidman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The World Jewish Congress and Chase Manhattan Bank have failed to work out a deal to pay former Chase customers whose assets were frozen as part of the bank's collaboration with the Nazis.

A 1998 investigation by Chase, and a subsequent broadcast by the BBC, revealed that the Paris subsidiary of one of Chase's predecessor banks helped funnel German assets, including money from Jewish refugees, to the Nazis from France after the United States entered World War II.

After the revelation, Chase said in a 1998 statement, the corporation "immediately began to consult with members of Jewish organizations and other experts to identify former customers or their heirs," planning to reimburse them with interest.

When lawyers for Holocaust victims included Chase in a class-action lawsuit in December 1998, the corporation approached the World Jewish Congress for assistance in establishing a payment process, "so that the affected parties receive payment directly," Chase said, "without incurring unnecessary legal expenses."

Declassified 1945 U.S. Treasury department documents subpoenaed from the Chase offices detailed the company's collaboration.

But according to Elan Steinberg, executive director of the WJC, failure on the part of Chase to allow independent access to the company's archives prompted the end of talks between the two groups.

"We want to stress that the problem to us is Chase's attitude today," Steinberg said. "They don't want to deal with the extensive issue of Nazi collaboration; we want to talk about the number of blocked Jewish accounts."

Chase maintains that "fewer than 100 accounts" are at issue, but the WJC is skeptical.

Steinberg cited the case of the Swiss banks, where independent researchers discovered far more dormant Holocaust-era accounts than did the banks themselves.

Chase sources contend that all the necessary information is already available. □

Groups organize political fast to coincide with Fast of Tammuz

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Several small Jewish organizations organized a fast and vigil here this week to focus attention on nuclear disarmament, poverty and the death penalty.

Nearly 100 Jews from across the country are expected to attend the "Fast for Peace and Justice" on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol on Thursday.

Participants are slated to lobby members of Congress later in the day to urge them to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty — and to pass a federal living wage law and a federal moratorium on the death penalty.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship, one of the organizers of the event, chose July 20 as the day for the fast because it corresponds with the Jewish holiday of the Fast of the 17th Day of Tammuz, which commemorates when the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.

Ken Giles, a member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship's executive committee, said it is important to let Congress and the non-Jewish community know that the issues have widespread support in the Jewish community.

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism endorsed the event.

Thursday's event is part of the 40-day "People's Campaign for Nonviolence" sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a national interfaith organization.

The 40-day campaign ends, coincidentally, on the Ninth of Av, the day of fasting and mourning commemorating the destruction of the temples in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E., as well as other calamities in Jewish history. □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Israeli media focus on Jerusalem as little news trickles from summit

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli media are searching for scraps of information to serve a news-hungry population amid an information blackout from the Camp David summit.

Almost all newspapers, from across the political spectrum, are exploring one issue in depth: the future of Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem is already divided, all that is left is the details,” read a headline in *Yediot Achronot*, Israel’s most popular daily.

The article, written by Roni Shaked, the newspaper’s veteran West Bank correspondent, went on to explain how predominantly Jewish western Jerusalem and mostly Arab eastern Jerusalem are already completely different entities.

According to leaks from Camp David, Jerusalem is officially on the negotiating table for the first time.

Since 1967, Israeli policy has held that Jerusalem will always be united under Israeli sovereignty, and there has been traditionally strong public opinion against any compromise in the city.

However, some experts said a subtle shift is taking place in the public debate.

Jacob Shamir, a lecturer in communications at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said a fierce battle is raging over how the Jerusalem issue will be “framed” in the press in the run-up to a referendum.

“The right is trying to frame the issue in black-and-white terms, that Jerusalem will either be divided or not divided,” Shamir said.

“The other side is trying to avoid such terminology and instead is discussing the functional benefits of various proposals.”

Yet although the Israeli mainstream press is predominantly liberal, Shamir believes the Israeli right is not necessarily at a disadvantage in getting its message across.

“The needs of the media to dramatize the story does not always work in favor of the left,” he said, adding that newspapers will often focus on sensational stories that highlight conflict instead of peace.

Ma’ariv, known to be the more centrist of Israel’s main daily newspapers, said in an editorial on Sunday that the Jerusalem issue should be left open under a final agreement.

It pointed out — in terms rarely stated in the Israeli debate — that “Jerusalem is a national and religious symbol for the Palestinians too,” yet stressed that the city also has an “overwhelming weight” as a “Jewish and Israeli religious and national symbol.”

Even some newspapers in the fervently Orthodox community, whose leaders tend to be more dovish than their voters, coolly dissected the options for Jerusalem.

Yom Hashishi, the haredi newspaper affiliated with the Shas Party, featured a full two-page spread discussing in detail all proposals on the table.

In a sidebar, the newspaper gave its own unique spin on the dangers of proposals to annex Jewish settlements in return for Arab neighborhoods. The annexation plan, it warned, “may strengthen Jewish Jerusalem, but it would also reduce the proportion of the haredi community and its influence in the city.”

Only in the overtly right-wing press of the national religious

and settlers camp did the prospect of a compromise on Jerusalem appear to be raised with the same degree of emotional intensity it has always evoked.

Hatzofeh, the national religious newspaper, warned of the “dangers threatening the unity of Jerusalem” and lashed out at reports that Barak has put Jerusalem on the table.

“The only thing left is to make clear to the prime minister in an unequivocal way that he has no mandate to discuss the future of Jerusalem,” said the newspaper. “This should be clarified to President Clinton as well.”

Supporters of this view hammered their point home in a rally in Tel Aviv on Sunday night, attended by an estimated 150,000 right-wing supporters, which urged Barak not to make any more concessions to the Palestinians. Banners flying in the crowds declared, “We are the majority.”

Left-wing Israelis are also stepping up a public campaign. They plan to hold a counter-rally on July 23.

Polls show that Israelis are divided down the middle on the peace issues, as is generally the case.

Even though nobody knows exactly what a peace deal may look like, a Gallup poll in Ma’ariv showed that 45 percent said they will vote in favor of such a deal and 43 percent said they will vote against it.

The poll also indicates that confusion abounds.

For example, only 26 percent of those polled knew that Ma’aleh Adumim, the settlement on the outskirts of Jerusalem, is in the West Bank.

According to leaks from Camp David, one Jerusalem proposal envisions Ma’aleh Adumim and other nearby settlements being annexed to Jerusalem in return for certain Palestinian neighborhoods being transferred to Palestinian rule.

Still, even as the sense of an imminent agreement or impending failure sparked new activism — with Israeli streets coming alive again with protesters — the public atmosphere is not as intense as during the Oslo negotiations and terrorist bus bombings of 1995 and 1996, when frequent and fervent right-wing rallies rocked Israel.

Several observers commented that Sunday’s rally actually fell flat, as settlers tried hard to create a more moderate image and attract centrists to their cause.

“There was no fire, no powerful emotions, no rage,” wrote Michal Capra in Ma’ariv.

“With all of its attempts to be in the consensus, lean towards the referendum, sing Israeli songs and impersonate the center, the right has lost its voice.”

Avraham Diskin, a professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an expert on Israeli public opinion, argued that the right may face a difficult task if Barak brings home an agreement involving compromises on Jerusalem.

Historically, Israelis have tended to follow their leaders on difficult decisions, even when the leaders appear to be operating outside the societal consensus.

This was the case when the government of Yitzhak Rabin decided to launch the Oslo peace process with Yasser Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, and it could happen again, even though polls consistently show that Jerusalem is the toughest nut to crack.

“If there will be a decision to divide Jerusalem,” predicted Diskin, “there will be a dramatic change in public opinion.” □