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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak blames Arafat for failure

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak placed the blame for the failure of the Camp David summit on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

"The vision of peace is not dead, but it sustained a heavy blow because of the Palestinian stubbornness," Barak said.

"Arafat was afraid to take the historic decision needed at this time to bring an end to the conflict." [Page 1]

Shake-up expected at Conference

A committee of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations is expected to recommend the ouster of three left-leaning members at its annual meeting on Wednesday.

The anticipated move has raised concerns of a rightward shift by the influential organization, a charge the Conference of Presidents' top executive rejects. [Page 4]

Alleged guard loses citizenship

A Philadelphia-area man faces deportation after a judge revoked his citizenship, citing "incontrovertible" evidence that the retired machinist worked as an SS guard at three Nazi concentration camps.

The judge ruled that Theodor Szehinskyj, 76, would not have been allowed to immigrate to the United States in 1950 if he had not hidden his wartime activities.

Szehinskyj's lawyer said he plans to appeal the ruling.

Report: Wallenberg killed in 1947

Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who helped save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II, was murdered in 1947 in Moscow's Lubyanka prison, according to the online edition of the Swedish newspaper Expressen.

The report cited a letter written by a top civil servant in the office of Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson.

Soviet, and later Russian, officials have long maintained that Wallenberg died of natural causes while in prison.

A panel made up of Russian and Swedish officials plans to issue a report on Wallenberg's fate later this year.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel braces for turmoil after Camp David failure

By David Landau and Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — With the failure of the Camp David summit, Israelis are bracing for a political shift and increased tensions with the Palestinians.

But the future of the peace process is uncertain.

The coming days and weeks will witness a complex interplay between events in Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas. How these events will come together is difficult to predict.

Speculation is now rampant over what Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's next steps will be — whether he will form a national unity government with the Likud Party opposition, try to rebuild his coalition or seek early elections.

At a news conference immediately after the summit's collapse, Barak said, his voice heavy with fatalistic resolve, that the people of Israel "will know how to unite in the face of danger."

The tenor of his remarks seemed to indicate he expects more strife ahead, rather than more diplomatic efforts to bridge gaps that proved unbridgeable during the summit.

In Jerusalem, seasoned political observers said he was referring to political strife, not military conflict. They said Barak's talk of danger and unity was a hint about forming a national unity government with Likud.

Other Israelis, as well as some American and Palestinian pundits, preferred to focus on a comment that President Clinton made Tuesday. In his own post-summit news conference, Clinton said the issues discussed at Camp David needed "to percolate" for some time before their full effect could be gauged and the way forward clearly seen.

In particular, Clinton said, a debate had already begun within Israel over the issue of Jerusalem, which he described as the "most difficult problem" blocking Israel and the Palestinians from reaching an agreement at Camp David.

Barak, too, welcomed the "significant and legitimate debate" regarding Jerusalem that the summit has triggered within Israel.

The prime minister mentioned at his news conference, almost in passing, that a senior U.S. official would soon be dispatched to the Middle East in an effort to salvage the peace process from what he described as the "heavy blow" it had suffered from the failure of the two-week summit.

Not all Israelis, however, were pessimistic about efforts to renew the negotiations.

Legislator Uri Savir, a longtime peace negotiator and a member of the Center Party, predicted that Tuesday's collapse would only result in a brief hiatus and that the peace process would go on through other channels.

Recommending face-to-face talks without an American presence, he noted that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat had several times in the past brought the peace process into crisis, only to allow it to resume and move forward in subsequent rounds.

Barak sounded a defiant note at his news conference Tuesday, saying he had done everything he could to try to reach a final peace agreement with the Palestinians. He also said he still hoped to end the Arab-Israeli conflict — but not at any price.

Barak placed the blame for the summit's failure squarely on Arafat. Despite Israel's willingness to make far-reaching concessions, Barak said, Arafat could not yield on Jerusalem. "The vision of peace is not dead, but it sustained a heavy blow because of the Palestinian stubbornness," Barak said. "Arafat was afraid to take the historic

MIDEAST FOCUS

Presidential vote scheduled

A former prime minister and a veteran politician were named as formal candidates for Israel's presidency.

The Knesset vote between Labor's Shimon Peres and Likud's Moshe Katsav, who are seeking to replace Ezer Weizman in the largely ceremonial post, is slated for July 31.

U.N. to deploy peacekeepers

Additional U.N. peacekeepers will be deployed along the Israeli-Lebanese border starting Wednesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council.

In Lebanon, a U.N. official said, "We are working on the final details on how many troops to put on the border."

The announcement came after the international body announced Monday that Israel and Lebanon have stopped violating each other's territory.

Syria wants U.N. to take town

Syria asked the United Nations to take control of a town near the Golan Heights rather than give part to Lebanon and part to Israel.

Hajar was cut in two when U.N. officials drew the international boundary after Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon in May.

Poll: Education divides Israelis

Ethnic background continues to divide Israelis when it comes to education, according to figures presented to a Knesset committee.

The figures show that 53 percent of Israelis of Ashkenazi background have post-secondary education, compared with 23 percent of native-born Israelis of Sephardi descent. Experts said the numbers are influenced by economic status because Ashkenazi families spend more money on supplemental studies for their children.

decision needed at this time to bring an end to the conflict."

Barak also said Israel's positions "received full legitimacy from the American government" — a claim that was backed up by Clinton, who indicated at his news conference that the Israeli side was more willing to compromise than the Palestinians.

While he praised both sides for making "progress on all the core issues," the president said "it is fair to say" that Barak "moved forward from his initial position more" than Arafat.

At the same time, however, Clinton made it clear that he was not blaming anybody.

He said his comment was "not so much as a criticism of Chairman Arafat, because this is really hard and had never been done before, but in praise of Barak."

For his part, Barak said all concessions and proposals Israel had agreed to during the course of the summit were now "invalid" and could not serve as an opening point for any future discussions.

He refused to comment directly on whether he had agreed to a form of Palestinian sovereignty in eastern Jerusalem.

Barak cited a statement from all three parties released at the end of the summit calling on all sides to refrain from unilateral measures and to try to prevent violence. The trilateral statement also said Israel and the Palestinians committed themselves to continue seeking a peace accord.

Barak called on the Palestinians to work against extremism and prevent any deterioration of the situation.

Pressure is likely to build, observers noted, with the approach of the Sept. 13 deadline the two sides had agreed on for reaching a final agreement.

Barak reiterated his long-standing warning that if Arafat goes ahead with a unilateral declaration of statehood if there is no agreement by Sept. 13, Israel would respond with unilateral steps of its own. This has previously been taken to mean that Israel would annex settlements in the West Bank. The future that Barak was not willing to comment on, however, was his political one.

Barak was elected last year on a platform of ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. He found himself on the eve of Camp David without a parliamentary majority. Three political parties walked out of the government in protest against the negotiations with the Palestinians and concessions they presumed Barak would make.

At the news conference, Barak sought to deflect questions on his next political steps.

"I would not take such a daring step as forming a national unity government without consulting" the media, Barak said, trying to brush off the question. "We will consider on our return to Israel what is right to do."

But despite Barak's efforts to skirt the question in the public arena, Israel's political sphere was already positioning itself for the anticipated new political reality.

Yisrael Ba'Aliyah leader Natan Sharansky, who pulled out of Barak's coalition before the start of the summit, said he would back a unity government. But legislator Silvan Shalom of Likud said there was no basis for such a government.

"The thing for Prime Minister Barak to do now is to go toward new elections," Shalom told Israel Radio. "I must say to Barak's credit that he knew the price of peace, and stopped."

Meanwhile, there is concern about how the summit's failure will play among Palestinians. For weeks, observers have warned that its failure could lead to an outbreak of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israeli media reported after the summit collapsed, Israel Defense Force's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, assessed the situation and said there did not appear to be any immediate need to beef up forces in the Palestinian territories.

Shortly after the suspension of the summit was announced, Hamas called on Arafat to return to armed struggle against Israel.

"The solution now is that Mr. Arafat and the negotiators declare the failure and futility of the entire peace process and return to the path of resistance and jihad," or holy war, senior Hamas official Abdel Aziz Rantissi told reporters.

"I renew my request to give Hamas a five-year chance to work its jihad and resistance. Within five years, Hamas will be able to achieve the gradual liberation of all of Palestine," he said. □



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JEWISH WORLD

German citizens give to fund

Private German citizens have contributed \$62,500 so far to a fund for slave and forced laborers, according to a report in the German newspaper Tagesspiegel.

Applications for payments from the approximately \$5.2 billion fund, which is mainly being supported by German companies and the German government, are expected to be sent out before the end of this year.

Rabbi blasted for threats

The Orthodox Union criticized a rabbi who said halachah, or Jewish law, might allow Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) to be assassinated for not supporting the immediate release of convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

According to the New Haven Register, Rabbi Mordechai Freedman of the American Board of Rabbis also called Lieberman a "traitor" for not doing more for Pollard, a former naval intelligence analyst who is serving a life sentence for passing secret U.S. military information to Israel.

Court urged to check Yahoo!

A state prosecutor urged a French court on Monday to appoint independent computer experts to test the assertion of Yahoo! that it is technically impossible to block access by French Internet users to Web sites selling Nazi paraphernalia.

In May, a French court ordered the Internet portal to prevent French Web surfers from taking part in any auctions on its Web site that deal in Nazi items. French law prohibits the sale of Nazi memorabilia.

Germans can't be kept off sites

Germany has given up trying to bar its citizens from accessing foreign-based neo-Nazi sites on the Internet.

Germany, which has some of the world's toughest laws banning hate speech, has decided that it is unrealistic to try to shield Germans from foreign Web sites, according to Deputy Interior Minister Brigitte Zypries, who deals with Internet issues.

"You can't change" the fact that the Internet exists, she told Reuters. "You can't build a wall around Germany."

Alaska gets Jewish B & B

A mikvah, Orthodox synagogue and kosher bed-and-breakfast are planned for Anchorage, which is home to 2,000 Jews.

According to the New York Jewish Week, a handful of Orthodox women currently take a three-and-a-half hour flight each month to Seattle, where the nearest mikvah is located.

American Jewish leaders worry violence could break out in Israel

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — Most American Jewish leaders say they fear the failure of the Camp David summit could lead to outbreaks of violence.

But those who opposed the talks in the first place are relieved to see them end without an agreement.

In an official statement, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee urged the Palestinians to "avoid unilateral actions that might lead to violence."

The AIPAC statement added that it was "gravely disappointed" and blamed the failure on Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations, told JTA, "Arafat has once again failed to demonstrate that he is a true partner for peace. He escalated the demands in the face of far-reaching Israeli concessions." But while disappointed, many leaders tried to put a positive spin on things. The American Jewish Congress issued a news release with the headline, "Camp David's failure may convince both sides that compromise is necessary."

Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum, which have consistently backed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's peace policies, emphasized that the discussions may pave the way for future talks.

"The upside is that the taboos against even considering compromise are broken, and both sides have begun the difficult process of climbing down the rhetorical trees they have climbed up," said Tom Smerling, director of IPF's Washington Center.

He said Barak has disclosed his willingness to make certain concessions on Palestinian sovereignty in eastern Jerusalem, and Arafat has recognized that Israel will not go back to exact pre-1967 borders and that most Palestinian refugees will not be able to return.

"In one form or another, they're going to have to come back and talk because they don't have the option, there's no place else to go," Smerling said.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, which has also been a vocal advocate of Barak and closely monitored the summit at the site, described the peace talks' failure as a "tragedy," but did not expect it to be the end of the peace process.

"The question is will they come back before a renewal of tensions or will they allow tensions and violence to force them back?" he asked. "To get so close and now to walk away would be a disaster."

Everyone interviewed expressed concern about potential outbreaks of violence following the summit failure.

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, said he had faxed a letter to President Clinton asking him to state forcefully that the United States will not tolerate Palestinian terrorism against Israel.

"Last week, he said he's worried about violence if no agreement is reached," said Klein, whose group strongly opposes Barak's peace efforts, asserting he is conceding far too much. "He should have said he would not tolerate violence. It was clear Clinton and Albright wanted to frighten Israel into an agreement."

American Jewish leaders are not expecting to see an end to tensions between American Jews who support Barak's efforts and those, like ZOA, that oppose them and have lobbied against the U.S. government providing foreign aid to cement any Israel-Palestinian agreements. Klein said he will continue to speak out against Barak's proposed concessions, and those in the pro-peace camp said they will continue mobilizing grass-roots American Jewish and congressional support for the process.

Julius Berman, past chairman of the Conference of Presidents and the Orthodox Union, said Jewish discord won't diminish.

"Now we have a new issue, and the issue is Barak's credibility," he said, referring to the prime minister's apparent willingness to make broader concessions on Jerusalem than he had pledged during last year's Israeli election campaign. □

(JTA staff writers Peter Ephross and Michael J. Jordan contributed to this report.)

Three groups may be ousted in Presidents Conference review

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Left-of-center members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations are leery that decisions expected Wednesday on the status of three current members and one new applicant may indicate a rightward shift for the organization.

One of the groups, the Labor Zionist Alliance, has historically been aligned with the Labor Party in Israel, the political home of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Such a move, critics say, would put the 54-member organization at odds not only with Barak and his peace policies, but also with many American Jews.

"I hope that the Conference of Presidents continues to pursue the broadest possible umbrella, which is inclusive and covers the broad spectrum of opinions that exist in the American Zionist community," said Mark Rosenblum, the founder and policy director of Americans for Peace Now.

This is not the first time the Presidents Conference — ostensibly a politically neutral, pro-Israel organization — has been accused of partisanship, a charge the organization's officials reject as "baseless."

"The right always see us as favoring the left, while the left always see us as favoring the right," said its executive vice chairman, Malcolm Hoenlein.

"That's why we're a consensus body, which has enabled us to continue for 40 years."

The Presidents Conference was founded in the mid-1950s in order to harness the cacophony of Jewish groups and opinion, and present a united Jewish front in its dealings with Washington.

Its mandate is "to strengthen all aspects of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and to protect and enhance the security and dignity of Jews abroad."

However, because of the long reign of Israel's conservative Likud Party and the Presidents Conference's loyalty to those administrations, some continue to perceive right-wing sympathies and lukewarm support for the peace-making efforts of the Labor Party's Yitzhak Rabin and Barak.

Those concerns were heightened when Ronald Lauder assumed the Presidents Conference chairmanship in June 1999.

Lauder is a Republican with close ties to former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, even Rosenblum, of the dovish Americans for Peace Now, praised Lauder for playing it fair during Barak's premiership.

But Rosenblum and others worry that could change Wednesday.

At the Presidents Conference's annual meeting, the membership committee will present its newly codified criteria for membership and the culmination of a two-year membership re-evaluation that was requested by the membership itself, Hoenlein said.

Central to these criteria will be a definition of what constitutes a "major" American Jewish organization. It is expected to go beyond simple membership or budget figures.

The group's officials declined to discuss the new criteria in advance of the meeting. But according to several sources, the membership committee is expected to recommend that three

organizations be ousted or relegated to "adjunct" status, which means they would not be full voting members.

In addition to the LZA, the other organizations, according to sources, are the National Committee for Labor Israel and the Women's League for Israel.

Insiders also predict that Meretz USA, whose application for membership was rejected last year along with three other applicants, will see its appeal rejected as well.

Meretz USA is ideologically close to its liberal Israeli namesake, which is the fourth-largest party in the Knesset. At a 1997 election for American representatives to the World Zionist Congress, Meretz USA garnered the most votes of any U.S. group allied with an Israeli party.

Finally, there is also a rumor, cited by several sources, that the membership committee may recommend the ouster of the American Friends of Likud. But critics speculate that such a move might be a maneuver to present an image of fairness.

For now, LZA President Jeffrey Mallow said he is in the dark about the meeting's outcome. "I would definitely like to know what's going on," Mallow said.

Meretz USA executive director Charney Bromberg was not optimistic Tuesday.

"We are entering a period now where there needs to be an inclusive central body for debating and articulating the views of American Jewry," Bromberg said.

"If the Conference is 'trimming its edges' and moves to cut or limit membership, it's moving in precisely the wrong direction at precisely the wrong time."

For his part, Hoenlein cited his group's support for the Barak government by pointing to an ad in *The Washington Post* that had greeted Barak on his arrival to Camp David earlier this month. He also cited a statement his group released Tuesday, lauding Barak's negotiating efforts and chastising the Palestinians for intransigence.

Hoenlein said that critics of the membership review are misguided in suggesting ideological motives.

"Organizations change over the years; does that mean they should automatically still be members, even if they no longer qualify?" Hoenlein said.

"This is an open, objective process, where the membership committee represents the broad spectrum of the Presidents Conference, sets standards and makes recommendations. Organizations will have the opportunity to appeal."

Stephen Wolnek, chairman of the membership committee and president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, could not be reached for comment.

The president of one group on the right side of the spectrum, Morton Klein of the Zionist Organization of America, also rejected the notion of a rightward shift. In fact, he lamented that the Presidents Conference "leans to the left, clearly and unequivocally."

Nevertheless, Klein, too, expressed dissatisfaction with the process of membership reassessment.

"The issue is not diversity of opinion within the Presidents Conference; the issue is fairness," he said.

While his views are far from those of the LZA, Klein asked, "On what basis is their status being changed, and are they being given ample time to correct any deficiencies that the committee believes exist?" □