



Daily News Bulletin

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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Reports: No trial for Netanyahu

Israel's attorney general will not bring charges against former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to Israeli media reports.

In March, police recommended that Elyakim Rubinstein file charges against Netanyahu for allegedly taking bribes during his tenure and for failing to return state property after leaving office.

L.A. day school vandalized

Vandals struck an Orthodox day school in the Los Angeles area, leaving behind smashed computers, broken windows and classrooms doused with foam from fire extinguishers.

During their rampage, the vandals also scrawled graffiti — including swastikas and anti-Semitic expletives — on the walls. Police blamed two teenage boys, residents of a home for youths with alcohol and drug problems, who were arrested on the school campus.

House OKs domestic violence act

Jewish groups applauded the U.S. House of Representatives' approval Tuesday of legislation to provide funding for programs that fight domestic violence.

The Violence Against Women Act now goes to the Senate.

Lieberman: I'm no rabbi

Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman says he should have answered differently a radio talk show host's question about intermarriage.

Lieberman told the Internet magazine Salon that he should have said, "I'm not running for chief rabbi, I'm running for vice president," when he was asked whether Judaism banned intermarriage and interracial dating.

No breakthroughs reported

No breakthroughs were reported during the meeting between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat at the Israeli premier's home in central Israel. [Page 4]

Because of Rosh Hashanah, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Oct. 2.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Action against ambassador touches nerve in Jewish world

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — In light of several recent security snafus, Washington's intelligence community is clearly under pressure to tighten the cordon around sensitive material.

But the fact that the first diplomat ensnared in the dragnet — Martin Indyk, the U.S. ambassador to Israel — happens to be Jewish and a controversial conduit in the Middle East peace process touches a nerve for American Jews.

As it became public over the weekend that Indyk's security clearance was suspended, anxiety that Jews may again be accused of "dual loyalty" intermingled with conspiracy theories of who was actually behind it.

One theory pinned it on a Republican effort to damage the Clinton administration and the Democrats' bid to retain the White House. Another suggested it was somehow coordinated by Likud, the Israeli opposition, and its U.S. allies, who are trying to undermine peace negotiations.

As the Indyk case continues to unfold, it's still unclear exactly what investigators have on him, if it will end his ambassadorship to Israel, and whether it will have any impact on the peace process. Ostensibly, the ambassador is accused of taking classified work home with him and using a laptop that did not have security clearance — actions that are said to be pervasive in the diplomatic corps.

Meanwhile, American Jewish leaders and lobbyists worked the phones, probing sources for both substance and scuttlebutt behind the State Department's attempted reassurances that there is "no indication of espionage" and no "intelligence information has been compromised." The crux of their concern was summed up in three questions:

- Was Indyk singled out?
- If so, why?
- And why now?

Jewish sensitivity to the "dual loyalty" accusation is not unfounded, say Jewish activists. That specter has loomed in several high-profile investigations against American Jews over the years.

The most famous is the Jonathan Pollard case. Pollard, a former U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, was convicted of espionage in 1985 for passing secret U.S. military information to Israel. Despite plea bargaining, Pollard was handed a life sentence — a move some Jews say smacked of anti-Semitism. At the time, other American Jews involved with intelligence were reportedly questioned about their views and loyalties.

More than a decade later, in February 1997, it was revealed that the U.S. Army was investigating David Tenenbaum, a weapons research analyst, for allegedly sharing classified documents with Israeli military officials. Tenenbaum, who was never charged, is currently suing army officials for being singled out because of his religion.

And in October 1997, the CIA questioned the Jewish connections of a young lawyer, Adam Ciralsky, who was to be promoted to a White House post. Ciralsky lost his job. This summer, he sued the CIA, claiming that rampant anti-Semitism within the agency destroyed his career.

In a February 2000 segment on the CBS television program "60 Minutes" that explored the Ciralsky case, an unidentified CIA official alleged that Israel recruits religious American Jews to spy on the United States.

Because of the sensitivity, Jewish leaders and lobbyists ferreting out more

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel rejected talks with Iran

Israel turned down Iranian offers during the past year to hold secret bilateral talks, according to Israel's foreign minister at the time.

David Levy told Israel Radio he was not sure "why they wanted to hold contacts," but said Israel rebuffed the overture because "things were not ripe." Levy added that Israeli officials feared the talks might offend the United States.

Barak pursues new coalition

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is continuing attempts to form a new governing coalition based on 60 Knesset members.

Such a coalition would have no majority in the Knesset, but the opposition would not be able to topple it. Barak hopes that 10 Arab Knesset members, who would not be asked to join, would nonetheless support the coalition from the outside.

Rise in Arab population cited

Jerusalem's Arab population is increasing at three times the pace of the Jewish population, according to a study released Tuesday. Researchers at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies predicted that at this rate Arabs will make up 40 percent of the population in 20 years, up from about 31 percent now. The study also predicted that fervently Orthodox Jews, who in 1995 made up 29 percent of Jerusalem's population, would make up 32 percent by 2020.

Higher economic growth forecast

Israel's economy should grow at a rate of 5 to 6 percent this year, higher than a previously forecast 4.5 percent growth rate, according to the nation's Central Bureau of Statistics.

Much of the growth was the result of the rapid expansion of Israel's high-tech sector and the end of a slowdown in more traditional industries, the bureau said Tuesday.

information from Washington are being unusually tight-lipped about what their sources are saying. They were reluctant to speculate publicly about his suspension, opting to wait for more details of the case to emerge.

Still, most agreed that as Capitol Hill is leaning on federal agencies to crack down on lax security, it was mere coincidence that Indyk was the first to be exposed. But at least one veteran Jewish leader suspects that some in Washington officialdom are engaging in ethnic profiling. "Coming on the heels of the Wen Ho Lee situation, I have the impression that the intelligence community is saying, 'We're not just picking on someone of Chinese ancestry — here's someone of Jewish ancestry who we're focusing on,'" said Seymour Reich, former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Reich was referring to the recent case of the Chinese American scientist who was indicted for security violations, detained in solitary confinement and then released after a judge chided the Justice Department for mishandling the case.

Reich, who over the years has tried to win Pollard's freedom, added that the case against Indyk "seems unfair" and that Indyk was "singled out. Until there's more information, that will be the lingering impression among some Jews."

The Jerusalem Post, meanwhile, on Monday quoted a Democratic congressional aide as saying that Indyk has for several years — even before he became ambassador to Israel for a second time in 1999 — been warned about "his lapses in securing materials and handling classified material."

As for who else could be behind the move against Indyk, theories abound. Indyk clearly has earned his share of enemies across the political spectrum.

In the Arab world, many decried his past employment with the leading pro-Israel lobby in the United States, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. On the other side, Jews resisting any concessions to the Palestinians have branded Indyk, who has been heavily engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, a "Jewish Arabist."

Some critics couldn't resist trying to connect the dots between a speech Indyk made earlier this month in Jerusalem and his security suspension.

In a speech at the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College, Indyk was quoted as saying that Jerusalem "is not, and cannot, be the exclusive preserve of one religion, and the solution cannot come from one side challenging or denying another side's beliefs." Indyk's critics, such as Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, viewed it as a call to divide Jerusalem.

"To me, it seems the greatest concern with regard to Indyk is not the most recent allegation about security, but about Indyk's speech in which he supported the Arab view to divide Jerusalem," Klein said.

Klein, who has lobbied for Indyk's recall during the past week, said Monday that he had actually received a few calls from supporters congratulating him on contributing to Indyk's suspension. But Klein said he did not know whether there was a connection between the complaints about Indyk's remarks and the move against him.

In a letter to the Conference of Presidents on Monday, Indyk sought to clarify that his comments were not out of line with U.S. policy.

"Some journalists chose to distort my remarks and convert them into criticism of Israel, which they were not," Indyk wrote. "Perhaps my meaning would have been clearer if I had added that Judaism has never claimed the Holy City as its 'exclusive preserve' and that Jews have never challenged or denied another side's beliefs."

Other Jewish leaders were skeptical that the speech and suspension were linked. "I haven't talked to anyone who would lead me to believe that it was anything other than a coincidence, in terms of the timing," said Martin Raffel, associate executive vice chairman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. However, he added, "the fact that no one's said that there isn't a connection doesn't mean that there isn't."

However, one source who declined to be identified told JTA that a second ambassador is also under investigation. His case has not been publicized, however, because he serves in a much lower-profile country than Indyk.

If nothing else, said Reich, the investigation of Indyk somehow tempers the boost to Jewish self-esteem provided by the nomination of Joseph Lieberman as the Democratic candidate for vice president.

"It almost brings us back to earth, this bubble that has burst," said Reich.

"Sure, there will be some shivers in the Jewish community, but it will pass." □



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JEWISH WORLD

Rabbis back separating twins

British rabbis of all denominations are supporting a court decision ordering the separation of conjoined twins, though the operation will mean the death of the weaker twin.

In a case that has sharply divided the nation, Britain's Court of Appeals last Friday upheld an earlier decision to separate the twins, who share vital organs. The parents of "Jodie" and "Mary" are opposed to the operation, although doctors believe that if the girls are not separated, both will die within months.

Museum balks at 'soap' reference

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington refused to sponsor a book-signing for an Atlanta man whose memoir includes the story of an uncle who said the Nazis forced him to make soap from victims at Auschwitz.

Museum officials said a senior historian read Ben Hirsch's "Hearing a Different Drummer" and questioned the accuracy of the soap-making passages.

Most Holocaust scholars dismiss as myth the belief that the Nazis made soap from the bodies of Jews.

Report: Christian right in decline

The Christian right in the United States may be on the decline, said a report issued by the American Jewish Committee.

According to "The Christian Right at the Millennium," the major problems facing the movement are the advanced age of most Christian right leaders and the movement's lack of organizational development.

Swiss official fired over writings

Switzerland's finance minister fired an official from his ministry because of anti-Semitic articles he wrote for an Internet site. Last week, Swiss media joined the nation's Jewish leaders in calling for the dismissal of Hanspeter Sutter, who wrote that if Hitler had "killed all the Jews, Switzerland would not have to pay billions to Holocaust survivors."

Finance Minister Kaspar Villiger initially said he was shocked by the articles, but he refused to dismiss Sutter. The president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, Alfred Donath, is claiming that the government only acts when it comes under pressure from the media.

German museums return art

Two German museums returned more than 80 Nazi-looted artworks to the heirs of a Leipzig-based Jewish publisher.

The descendants of Gustav Kirstein received the works decades after they first sought the return of the collection.

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Yugoslavia's Jews hopeful their days of isolation are over

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — As they joined the rest of the nation in an anxious wait for the definitive outcome of Sunday's presidential election, Yugoslavia's 3,000 Jews knew that this Rosh Hashanah could open up not just a new year, but a new world.

"We are all now, together with the whole country, expecting changes, after 10 long years of suffering and fear," said one community activist.

Opposition leader Vojislav Kostunica claimed victory in Sunday's poll, and Jews were among the tens of thousands of his jubilant supporters who later celebrated in the streets of Belgrade, Yugoslavia's capital.

On Tuesday, the State Election Commission announced that Kostunica had finished first in the election. But it said he had not crossed the 50 percent threshold needed to avoid a runoff with incumbent President Slobodan Milosevic, the indicted war criminal whose brutal nationalistic policies have isolated and economically ruined Yugoslavia during the past decade.

The commission said Kostunica won 48.22 percent of the vote to 40.23 for Milosevic. The opposition claims Kostunica won outright and has refused to join the runoff, scheduled for Oct. 8.

"There is no specific Jewish issue in this mess, if you don't count a graffiti I saw on a wall the other day: 'Kostunica, son of a Jewish woman' — probably meant as an insult," said Brane Popovic, a former president of the Belgrade Jewish community who is a longtime supporter of the opposition.

Although in recent years Yugoslav Jewish leaders were able to attend international Jewish meetings, they often felt isolated from the world Jewish community — particularly during last year's NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav Jews who attended the General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities held in Nice in May 1999 said they felt as if they were double victims — of NATO and of Milosevic.

Dire economic conditions hit the largely elderly Jewish community hard, making social welfare an important part of communal activities. Soup kitchens operate in several Jewish communities.

Also, the political repression, economic woes, and the NATO bombing all contributed to a "brain drain" of young people.

"Most of our young members left Yugoslavia, and we believe that even if there will be changes for the better they won't return," said Mira Poljakovic, leader of the International Council of Jewish Women's chapter in the Yugoslav city of Subotica.

"So our High Holidays are sad ones," she said. "The synagogue is full of elderly people who are sad because they are alone, without their families. So we are organizing collective dinners and snacks after the services, especially on erev Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur."

Throughout the Milosevic regime, individual Jews took political stands, with many opposing Milosevic.

But, fearing reprisal and manipulation, official Jewish organizations made it a strict policy not to openly assume a political position.

The Subotica community leadership, however, got around this prohibition by working indirectly against regime policies.

One way was through the activities of a humanitarian organization, La Benevolencija Yugoslavia.

Its most important projects were carried out in the republic of Montenegro, Serbia's junior partner in Yugoslavia, whose government is open toward the West.

It maintained close links with the Montenegrin government, including direct contacts with its prime minister. Earlier this month, the International Council of Jewish Women sent another indirect signal by inviting the wife of the Montenegrin prime minister to an International Women's Interfaith Conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia.

However, no one associated with the Serbian regime was invited. □

U.S. plays host to another round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In another last-ditch effort to keep the peace process alive, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators arrived in Washington this week to hold separate meetings with U.S. officials.

The delegations, led by acting Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israeli attorney Gilad Sher and Palestinian negotiators Saeb Erekat and Mohammed Dahlan, will go to a secluded location in the Washington area.

Israeli media reported that an American proposal would place the Temple Mount under the supervision of the U.N. Security Council, while giving custodianship to the Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has rejected transferring sovereignty to either the Palestinians or an Islamic body, but has been open to other solutions.

The Palestinians have so far rejected giving control of the Temple Mount to a non-Muslim authority.

Barak also has said he still wants a comprehensive settlement, but is reportedly willing to postpone discussion of control over the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

The Palestinians have said they do not want a partial agreement.

The Palestinians need to show greater flexibility and make compromises, said one Israeli official.

"We are willing to explore far-reaching ideas on the Temple Mount," the official said, and Israel wants a compromise that will allow both sides to say they got what they wanted.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright denied reports of an American proposal on the table and played down the ability of American facilitators to push compromise proposals.

"The United States cannot make existential decisions for either of these parties," Albright testified Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"There cannot be an American imposition. There can be American assistance, American suggestions, but I can assure you that the only way there will be a comprehensive agreement is if both the parties agree to it."

Nevertheless, Albright said the United States is "the country that can make a difference" and has the ability to bring the parties together to help them make the tough decisions.

Pressure remains on the current round of talks.

"This is the final lap in the process," an Israeli official said. "If we don't get some decisions soon, we will miss an historic opportunity."

The U.S.-sponsored negotiations follow a late-night meeting Monday between Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in Israel at Barak's Kochav Yair home.

The meeting marked the first time the two leaders have sat down together since the U.S.-hosted Camp David summit ended without an agreement in July.

No breakthroughs were reported during the meeting, though Barak described it as "warm" and officials said there was "positive atmosphere."

President Clinton telephoned during the meeting to urge the two leaders to advance the stalemated talks.

Meanwhile, as the negotiators arrived in Washington, lawmakers on Capitol Hill continued work on legislation that pressures the Palestinians not to unilaterally declare a state.

The House International Relations Committee passed a bill Tuesday, sponsored by Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), that would stop U.S. funds to the Palestinians if they insist on declaring statehood before reaching a peace agreement.

The bill was expected to be brought to the floor as early as Wednesday.

Similar bills have been introduced in the Senate. □

Visiting Iranian foreign minister met with protesters in California

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi was met by angry protesters during his four-day visit to Southern California last week.

More than 100 demonstrators, shouting "Death to the Islamic Republic" and "Kharrazi must go," threw eggs and plastic bottles at the luxury cars of guests arriving Saturday at an Orange County reception.

Inside the hotel, Kharrazi urged sympathetic listeners to lobby for the rights of Iranians anywhere. His tour of the United States, the first by a high-ranking official of the Islamic regime, embroiled him in demands for the release of 10 Iranian Jews sentenced as spies for Israel.

Two days earlier, Kharrazi ran into an even more emotional demonstration on the UCLA campus.

He was met by a crowd of some 200 Iranian expatriates, about evenly divided between Muslims and Jews.

Many displayed pictures of relatives executed or jailed by the Iranian regime.

"All I want to know is why they executed my husband 12 years ago," said one woman, tears streaming down her face.

Others waved banners and placards demanding "Free Iranian Jews," "Down With the Terrorist Regime," "Free Iran Students" and "UCLA, Shame on You."

The crowd outside the James West Alumni Center, where some 100 carefully screened guests met with Kharrazi, was ringed on four sides by barricades and platoons of police and sheriff's deputies, reminiscent of the campus riots of the 1960s and '70s.

Invited guests who tried to run the gauntlet of demonstrators were greeted with shouts of "murderer" and "terrorist." Some were slapped, jostled and spat upon, until police in riot gear moved in with clubs and pepper spray.

Inside the West Center, Kharrazi told the audience that he didn't understand Western criticism of the trial of the 10 Jews, which he described as just and fair.

"They do not accept the Iranian Jewish trial, which is very arrogant," he said.

"I do not understand when a government from the outside intervenes in the internal affairs of another country."

After the meeting, while most of the invited guests were led out a rear exit under police protection, one man confronted the demonstrators.

Muslim protesters pelted him with a barrage of eggs at close range. □