



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 80, No. 230

Wednesday, December 11, 2002

85th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Scholar denies scandal role

A leading American Jewish supporter of the Middle East peace process is denying reports that he made millions of dollars from a slush fund involving Yasser Arafat and an Israeli envoy. Stephen P. Cohen, a national scholar with the Israel Policy Forum and president of the Institute for Middle East Peace and Development think tank, told JTA he never had business dealings with the Palestinians.

Cohen long has been involved in both behind-the-scenes and public efforts to forge Israeli-Palestinian ties. But he denied a report in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* last week that he helped Israeli envoy Yossi Ginosar illegally transfer \$300 million in Palestinian Authority funds to a secret Swiss bank account controlled by Arafat, the P.A. president.

Carter accepts Nobel

President Carter accepted the 2002 Nobel Prize for peace efforts that began with the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt that he brokered. "Instead of entering a millennium of peace, the world is now, in many ways, a more dangerous place. The greater ease of travel and communication has not been matched by equal understanding and mutual respect," he said.

Rabbis cuffed in anti-war protest

Several rabbis were arrested Tuesday during a protest against a possible war with Iraq. Rabbi Arthur Waskow of Philadelphia and New York rabbis Michael Feinberg and Ellen Lippmann were among 97 people arrested for blocking the entrance of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York.

The protest was among anti-war demonstrations held in more than 100 American cities in conjunction with International Human Rights Day. [Page 1]

Labor chooses candidates

Political doves and hawks shared top spots in the Labor Party primary to choose its candidates for Israel's January elections.

According to final results from Monday's primary, former Cabinet minister Matan Vilnai, a backer of dovish party leader Amram Mitzna, placed first. Also finishing in the top 10 slots were doves Avraham Burg and Yuli Tamir, alongside more hawkish members Dalia Itzik and Ephraim Sneh. [Page 4]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Jews raise a small but visible flag against possible war in Iraq

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA)— Three rabbis were among 100 people arrested here Tuesday after blocking the U.S. Mission to the United Nations to protest a possible war with Iraq.

Hours later, from his prison cell packed with 62 men, Rabbi Arthur Waskow of Philadelphia's Shalom Center told JTA that those arrested were "joyful and determined."

"Whether the war is on or whether we've been able to force it to delay, either way there will be these demonstrations," Waskow blared, rousing the prisoners.

Tuesday's arrest of the rabbis marks one of the first visible signs of Jewish activism in the small but growing American movement to oppose a war in Iraq.

While Jews have historically embraced anti-war movements, they have not been in the forefront of this one — in part because of concern about Iraq's threat to Israel and in part because a majority of American Jews, like a majority of Americans, appear to back President Bush's link between action against Iraq and the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Michael Feinberg and Ellen Lippmann, two New York rabbis, were also arrested for civil disobedience during the anti-war demonstration organized by the New York City Forum of Concerned Religious Leaders that drew more than 200.

Singing peace songs, the activists, many wearing placards with pictures of Iraqi women and children, stressed the impact of a war with Iraq on innocent Iraqis they claim have already suffered under a U.S. embargo.

Held in conjunction with International Human Rights Day, anti-war demonstrations were held in more than 100 cities throughout the country.

European rallies drew even larger crowds, with thousands thronging demonstrations in Rome and Paris.

While individual Jews were represented at the rallies — Waskow spoke as did Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream — Jewish involvement in the fledgling anti-war movement appears minimal.

Other left-wing groups speaking out against war include Tikkun, headed by Rabbi Michael Lerner, and Jewish Voice for Peace, a San Francisco-based Jewish organization that advocates for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Jewish Voice for Peace was one of the sponsors of an anti-war demonstration in Oakland, Calif., on Tuesday, which drew about 300 people.

But most mainstream Jewish organizations, across the religious and political spectrum, have come out at least in cautious support of a war.

There's a perception in the Jewish community that "to remove Saddam Hussein would somehow strengthen the security of Israel," said Feinberg, who directs an interfaith organization in New York.

"I think a war against Iraq could inflame the tensions and the violence that already exists in the whole region and turn it into complete conflagration which would help no one's security, not Israelis, not Palestinians, not Iraqis and not Americans."

Most Christian denominations have made statements opposing the war, according to Feinberg, adding that he hopes that rabbis and Jewish communal organizations will follow suit.

But Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents

MIDEAST FOCUS

P.A. court wants suspect freed

A Palestinian court ordered the release of an official suspected by Israel of financing the Karine-A arms smuggling affair.

The Ramallah court said Tuesday it found no evidence linking Fuad Shubaki to the smuggling ship, which was intercepted by Israel in January. Shubaki was jailed in a Jericho prison under U.S. and British supervision in May, following a U.S.-brokered deal to end Israel's siege of Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters. Israeli officials said Shubaki's release would violate international agreements and give Israel the right to try to capture him.

The release requires final approval from Arafat.

17th bus bombing victim ID'd

The 17th victim of a June bus bombing in northern Israel was identified Tuesday. The victim was identified as Eliyahu Timsit, 32, from the southern town of Sderot. Following the screening of a documentary on the June 5 attack at Megiddo junction and the circulation of a composite sketch of the unknown victim, a taxi driver told police he had driven Timsit from Sderot to Tel Aviv, from where he was traveling on to Tiberias, Israel Radio reported.

Timsit's family reported him missing a month after his disappearance, but did not connect it to the attack, the report said. In the attack, a bus was traveling from Tel Aviv to Tiberias when the driver of an explosives-laden car pulled up alongside and detonated his cargo.

E.U. still backs Palestinian state

E.U. leaders were expected to reiterate their support for the creation of a Palestinian state during a summit this week in Copenhagen.

The officials were also expected to restate their willingness to continue providing financial support to the Palestinian Authority.



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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of Major American Jewish Organizations, had a different take. Jews "understand that the war on terrorism is vital to the security of the United States of America's interests abroad, to the stability of the world, to any prospect of stability in the Middle East, for peace for Israel. This is an integral part of that war."

The Conference of Presidents, which is an umbrella group of Jewish groups, stands by its statement issued two months ago that war should be employed as a last resort, but war may be the "only option," Hoenlein said.

"I think that people have to put into context the developments and recognize the true nature of the enemy that we are confronting," which is part of a terrorist network that has declared war on Jews all over the world, he said.

But according to Waskow, supporting war with Iraq endangers Israel.

"The Bush policy puts Israel in enormous danger, and the Jews should be opposing that policy with all their energy," he said, citing CIA officials who claim Iraq would only employ weapons of mass destruction if faced with no negotiating room.

And the most likely target of an attack would be Israel, said Waskow, who was released Tuesday afternoon along with the others.

He and the others now must appear in court to face charges of disorderly conduct.

Waskow believes Bush' intentions are to strengthen his own standing and to empower "big oil," without regard for the U.N. inspections process.

Waskow, who is organizing fast days in support of the anti-war effort, thinks that Jews have not been active in the anti-war movement because they are waiting for other Jews to step forward.

"We are making it visible that there are committed Jews who are opposed to war and as that becomes more visible, I think many more Jews will" become activists, he said.

John Berman, a 44-year old congregant at Brooklyn's Kolot Chayeinu, who hushed another activist shouting "Free Palestine" during Tuesday's demonstration in New York, is hoping to broaden the tent for Jews in the anti-war movement.

The "silent majority" of Jews stems from the fact that "they see the U.S. administration as a big Israel ally right now," he said

But that's a dangerous alliance, Berman said.

"I think the Bush administration is profoundly reactionary and really goes against what I consider fundamental Jewish" values of peace and social justice. "I think we're making a pact with the devil."

But according to Hoenlein, war with Iraq may be a necessary part of the war on terrorism.

It may increase tension for Israel in the short term, he said.

"In the longer term, I think it will be extremely beneficial if it is pursued properly and successfully.

"If we fail to act or act and fail, and Saddam emerges again as he did after 1991, I think it will embolden more terrorists and more Islamic extremism in the region." □

Hillel ban conditionally lifted

MONTREAL, Dec. 11 (JTA) — The student union of Montreal's Concordia University conditionally lifted its ban on the school's Hillel.

The ban was imposed Dec. 2 after the pro-Palestinian union accused Hillel of distributing fliers recruiting volunteers for the Israeli army.

The Concordia Student Union lifted the ban this past weekend when it learned of Hillel's intention to sue.

The student union is demanding that Hillel must sign a document saying it will adhere to the union's policy guidelines, which ban the distribution of literature the union deems offensive.

Hillel officials say they haven't received any document to sign — but made their own demands. Ariela Cotler, president of Hillel Montreal, said Hillel expects the ban to be lifted in writing, and also is demanding an apology for the ban. An emergency meeting of Hillel was scheduled for Tuesday night after the student union did not meet a Monday deadline for Hillel's demands. The union's council of representatives is scheduled to discuss the issue Thursday. □

JEWISH WORLD

Hearings held on anti-Semitism

A U.S. agency held hearings in Washington about anti-Semitism in Europe.

The U.S. Helsinki Commission hosted a group of German legislators Tuesday to develop a response to increased anti-Semitism in the region covered by the 55-member Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The hearing was a follow-up to a similar session last July in Berlin.

Ambassador Alfred Moses, a past president of the American Jewish Committee and former U.S. ambassador to Romania, urged the United States to press European leaders to combat the rising tide of anti-Semitism.

"Many European Jews today feel more vulnerable, disillusioned and frightened than at any time since the Holocaust," he said.

Court to take up cross burning

The U.S. Supreme Court will take up a case Wednesday on the constitutionality of cross burning.

A coalition of groups headed by the Anti-Defamation League filed a brief for the case in August, arguing that cross-burning incidents should be viewed as illegal only if they are used to harass, intimidate or inspire violence.

The coalition includes Hadassah, the American Jewish Committee, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

Lebanon station targeted

Lawmakers are urging the Bush administration to prohibit U.S. companies from advertising on a Lebanese TV station linked to Hezbollah.

At least 22 legislators have signed a letter, drafted by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), that calls for the White House to punish the Al-Manar station because the State Department has linked it to a terrorist group.

Currently, U.S. companies may do business with Al-Manar, since the Treasury Department has not designated it as an organization subject to foreign asset control.

Al-Manar is believed to be geared toward recruiting Hezbollah members and raising money for families of Palestinian terrorists.

Cultural property pact inked

The United States and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed an agreement on preserving cultural properties.

The agreement signed Tuesday, which deals with Jewish and other cultural properties, covers places of worship, historic sites, monuments, cemeteries and cultural archives.

Turkish leader stresses strong ties with Israel in meeting with U.S. Jews

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — At a moment of transition in the country's history, the Turkish leadership is reaching out to the American Jewish community.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the incoming Justice and Development Party, known as the AKP, met with Jewish leaders here Tuesday to express gratitude for the support Turkey has received from the American Jewish community, and to emphasize the bond between Israel and Turkey.

Erdogan's meeting with the Jews came just before his meeting with President Bush, who had summoned the Turkish leader to try to convince him to back U.S. plans for a war against Iraq. Turkey, for its part, is seeking U.S. — and Jewish — assistance in its long-sought bid to join the European Union.

Erdogan, through a translator, said he favored continuing the relationship between Israel and Turkey that was begun by his political predecessors. He also said he would set no preconditions on that relationship and would support expanding it.

"I don't find it adequate, the current economic and trade relationship we have with Israel," Erdogan said to a group of some 10 Jewish officials at a meeting convened by the American Jewish Committee.

Military relations between the countries were not discussed, but Jewish leaders say it has remained solid.

The news is welcomed by the Jewish world, initially concerned about the election of a party with Islamic roots in a country founded on democratic, secular principles.

"Those who say nothing has changed are wrong," said Barry Jacobs, director of strategic strategies for the American Jewish Committee, who attended the meeting.

"He has an Islamist constituency, but nevertheless, he has a reason to preserve this relationship."

Turkey, a NATO member and close ally of the United States, is seen as an important asset to Israel in the Middle East.

Turkey serves as both a bridge to other Muslim states in the region and as a strategic counterbalance to countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq.

Israel has provided weapons to Turkey, which has had problems obtaining them from the United States because of congressional ties to Turkey's foes, the Armenian and Greek communities. In exchange, Israel has garnered one of its few true allies in the region, as well as airspace and a trading partner.

"Israel gets an Islamic partner, a Muslim partner, that even in the height of the intifada, Ariel Sharon could still pay a state visit to," Jacobs said.

Turkey's relations with American Jews reaches back decades, when Turkey often turned to the Jewish community to support its interests in Washington, both political and economic.

And Turkey was seen as a country to work with, in part because it was a secular democracy that has treated well its Jewish population, which dates back more than 500 years and now numbers close to 19,000.

Erdogan, whose party won in last month's elections, is currently barred from becoming prime minister because of a 1999 conviction for antisecular activities.

He is expected to be appointed after a change in the country's constitution.

During his meeting with Jewish officials Tuesday, Erdogan pledged to fight anti-Semitism in the Arab world, and said that E.U. membership would allow Turkey to work toward ending anti-Semitism in Europe as well.

One topic that was not broached at the Jewish meeting, but is on the minds of everyone, is Iraq. Turkey is being pressured by the Bush administration to support possible U.S. action against Iraq.

The administration is seeking support not only for the use of bases for airstrikes, as it got during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, but also for ground attacks in northern Iraq.

But Turkey is not making a public statement on the issue, despite intense administration pressure that included a visit last week by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

As parties choose Knesset lists, results may affect government*By Leslie Susser*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Likud Party's list of Knesset candidates, chosen in a party primary this week, left Ariel Sharon's campaign strategists scratching their heads.

With national elections approaching on Jan. 28, they had meticulously laid out a centrist strategy in which the prime minister directs moderate peace messages at the large reservoir of floating voters between Labor and Likud, who take a tough line on security but believe in the possibility of a negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians one day.

It is in the battle for the centrists that Israeli elections are won and lost, experts say.

The problem for Sharon's spin doctors is that the list of Knesset candidates elected by the Likud's 3,000-strong Central Committee on Sunday leans heavily toward the hawks.

In contrast, the Labor Party, which also voted for its Knesset list this week, shoved the doves to the back of the line and promoted the party's centrists.

In addition to determining which politicians are likely to rise to prominence after the elections, the lists may help determine whether Israel is led by another unity government or whether its next government will tilt strongly toward one side.

In Likud, all nine of the top spots after Sharon are occupied by people opposed to President Bush's "road map" to peace and Palestinian statehood, which Sharon says he supports.

Environment Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, who finished at the top of the Central Committee poll behind the assured spots for Sharon and Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, described the outcome as "a vote against a Palestinian state."

That kind of talk hardly helps Sharon's strategists project a credible centrist message.

Labor Party strategists, on the other hand, were delighted at the Knesset slate the party's 110,000 members chose on Monday.

Centrists like ex-generals Matan Vilnai, Efraim Sneh and Danny Yatom finished high on the list.

The party's most dovish figures — Yossi Beilin, one of the chief architects of the Oslo peace process; former Peace Now leader Tsali Reshef; and Haifa lawyer Yossi Katz — all were relegated to bottom spots, with little hope of winning Knesset seats.

That makes it easier for Labor to fight for the center ground. Indeed, according to Ma'ariv columnist Dan Margalit, Labor leader Amram Mitzna could hardly have asked for a better list with which to tackle the Likud's considerable lead in the polls.

"Mitzna may not be able to prove that Sharon doesn't mean what he says" about wanting to negotiate peace on the basis of the Bush plan, Margalit wrote. "But he will be able to say to the public that even if Sharon is sincere, he won't be able to deliver."

Writing in Yediot Achronot, political analyst Sima Kadmon also suggested that Sharon would not be able to deliver peace — unless he formed another national unity government with Labor as a counterweight to his own party.

"Unless Sharon gets a strong Labor Party with which he can form a coalition on the basis of real partnership, the fate of his peace initiative has already been sealed," Kadmon wrote. "With Likud hawks like Tzachi Hanegbi, Silvan Shalom, Limor Livnat,

Dan Naveh and Yisrael Katz, there is no Palestinian state, no evacuation of settlements, no Bush road map."

Campaign strategist Eyal Arad acknowledged that Sharon is aiming for the center ground, and suggested that his trump card will be Sharon's close coordination with the United States on the Palestinian issue. In early December, at a conference on Israel's national security, Sharon reiterated his support for President Bush's plan for a two-state solution with the Palestinians.

The timing and the message had been carefully chosen: Sharon was laying the first major building block for his two-pronged campaign, against both the parties to his right and Mitzna's Labor on his left.

The implication is that Sharon not only is ready to make peace, but can do so in full coordination with Washington — whereas Mitzna's plan, which includes the possibility of a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip even without a peace agreement, would not have American sanction.

Labor leaders dismissed the Sharon statement as electioneering. Haim Ramon, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, called it an "election trap."

Sharon, he says, has absolutely no intention of negotiating Palestinian statehood or evacuating Jewish settlements.

On the other hand, he says, Mitzna would make a real effort to negotiate peace — and, once elected, also would coordinate his plans with the Americans.

Sharon's problems with Likud's Knesset list lie not only in winning the centrist vote from Labor.

He has far fewer supporters in high places on the list than does his archrival, Netanyahu. Some confidants say that could restrict Sharon's freedom of action — for example, in forming a coalition with Labor, rather than the far right, if Likud wins the elections.

Netanyahu says he won't use his camp to undermine Sharon's chances in the election — but after that, Netanyahu warned, how he acts will depend on what Sharon does. In other words, if Netanyahu is denied a top ministry in a new Sharon government, Sharon could face a mini-rebellion in his own party.

Despite the elation of Mitzna's campaign strategists over the party's election list, the Labor leader faces a similar problem.

Most of the top people on the list are supporters of the former party leader, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer. They could push Mitzna into joining a coalition with Sharon on terms he would rather reject, or even chip away at his leadership within Labor.

And there is another problem with the Labor list: The demotion of party doves could lead left-wing voters, who had been drawn to Mitzna's clear-cut positions about peace, to think again. Some might shift their allegiance from Labor to the Meretz Party.

But the bottom line is this: Even if Labor does manage to recapture some of the center ground from the Likud, Sharon is still the odds-on favorite to retain the premiership in the elections. Though there is still plenty of time until the vote, polls show Likud winning a landslide victory.

As Labor's Shimon Peres, the doyen of Israeli politicians, shrewdly points out, that means the election is really about the kind of coalition that emerges afterwards.

That takes on added significance given the hawkish nature of the Likud list, Peres says. If Labor does well, it will be able to curb the right wingers in Likud; if not, he warns, they may push Sharon into the arms of the far right. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)