Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 164

Thursday, September 4, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Powell raps Arafat

Colin Powell said the "road map" peace plan is making "slow progress."

Speaking to reporters Wednesday, the U.S. secretary of state reiterated calls for Palestinian Authority security forces to be consolidated under the direction of a single person, who would report to P.A. Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. Powell also chastised P.A. President Yasser Arafat but did not respond to Israeli suggestions that Arafat might be expelled by the end of the year.

If some Palestinians "don't like the road map, I don't know what they will like, because the road map shows the way forward to the end of violence, the end of terror and the creation of a Palestinian state," Powell said.

Is Abbas threatening to quit?

The Palestinian Authority prime minister reportedly is threatening to resign.

The Palestinian Authority's information minister, Nabil Amer, said Mahmoud Abbas would resign if Palestinian legislators do not give him a vote of confidence on Thursday.

Abbas is engaged in a power struggle with P.A. President Yasser Arafat. Amer later denied making the statements, which were reported by Reuters.

Meanwhile, the speaker of the Palestinian Parliament, Ahmed Karia, said there would be no vote of confidence on Thursday, when Abbas is to present his accomplishments in office during an address to the Parliament.

Ukraine gets new chief rabbi

A Belgian rabbi was elected to become Ukraine's new chief rabbi. Rabbi Azriel Haikin, who lives in Brussels, is expected to arrive in Ukraine to assume his new post next week.

The status of the current chief rabbi of Ukraine and the capital city of Kiev, Yaakov Dov Bleich, is unclear. Participants in Tuesday's Congress of Ukrainian Rabbis elected Haikin, currently chief rabbi of Brussels, as the new top rabbinical authority of Ukraine. Haikin, 73, was born in Ukraine, Europe's fourth-largest Jewish community, but left the Soviet Union after World War II.

Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma is expected to receive Haikin on Tuesday.

10 YEARS AFTER OSLO

A decade after Oslo, Israel and Palestinians face a changed world

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — On the face of it, the Oslo peace process failed to achieve very much. Ten years after Israelis and Palestinians astounded the world by signing the accords, the two sides again are locked in armed struggle and are raising basic questions of legitimacy and recognition.

In terms of conflict resolution, the parties seem to have stumbled back to a pre-Oslo square one.

But the situation today in fact is very different than it was a decade ago. Major political and geopolitical changes in the 10 years since Oslo, and the Oslo process itself, have colored political thinking on both sides.

In Israel, taboos like the existence of a Palestinian state have been irrevocably smashed, while on the Palestinian side there is deeper questioning of the efficacy of the terrorist weapon.

Perhaps most significantly, profound regional and international developments seem to be playing in Israel's favor.

In Israel, the vagaries of the Oslo process changed political thinking on the right and the left. The peace process undercut the right's dream of "Greater Israel," while the process' collapse shattered the left's dream of an idyllic, two-state solution in a "New Middle East."

Before Oslo, the thought of a Likud prime minister agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state would have been inconceivable. Indeed, when Oslo was signed, Labor leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were careful not to commit themselves to Palestinian statehood for fear of sparking a public outcry.

Now, 10 years after the famous handshake on Sept. 13, 1993, over 60 percent of Israelis — including Likud Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — back the two-state solution.

The failure of the parties to see the Oslo process through led to two significant conclusions on the Israeli side: If there are new agreements, there must be scrupulous third-party monitoring to ensure implementation; but if, ultimately, there is no credible peace partner, Israel should consider unilateral separation from the Palestinians.

The recent peace plan known as the "road map" provides the third-party supervision the Oslo process lacked. If it, too, fails to gather momentum, calls for unilateral separation will grow in Israel.

The dynamics of Oslo clarified for many Israelis the advantages of a two-state solution and the demographic dangers inherent in the present status quo. Even erstwhile right-wingers like the former minister for strategic planning, Dan Meridor, now make the classic Labor argument that, if it wishes to remain a Jewish and democratic state, Israel must separate politically from the Palestinians before they become a majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Though Sharon doesn't use the demographic terminology, clearly it's in the back of his mind when he says that Israel should not rule over 3 million Palestinians and when he calls for an end to "occupation."

On the Palestinian side, two contradictory post-Oslo strategies emerged: forcing Israeli concessions through terror or abstaining from terror and turning international sympathy into pressure on Israel.

Encouraged by the Israeli retreat from Lebanon in May 2000 and what he perceived as Saddam Hussein's growing power in Iraq, Palestinian Authority President Yasser

MIDEAST FOCUS

P.A. bans 'martyr' posters

The Palestinian Authority banned schools from hanging posters of Palestinians killed during the intifada.

The P.A. banned the posters, which help create a cult of "martyrs" around those killed during the intifada

The move is part of an effort to calm the atmosphere in Palestinian schools, which began the academic year this week.

Students also are being banned from participating in demonstrations or writing graffiti relating to the ongoing violence, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Police pardons not recommended

No pardons should be given to police officers involved in quelling Israeli Arab riots in October 2000, Israeli officials said.

Both Israeli President Moshe Katsav and Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein said the next step in examining the behavior of police, who killed 12 Israeli Arabs and one Palestinian Arab during the riots, should be the investigation recommended this week by the Orr Commission.

The comments followed reports that Israel's police chief, Shlomo Aharonishky, is looking into "pre-emptive pardons."

Katsav talks to Iranians via radio

Israeli President Moshe Katsav hosted a call-in radio show with listeners in his native Iran.

Katsav chatted in Hebrew and Farsi with Iranian listeners who phoned during Monday's call-in show on the Persian service of Israel Radio.

Israel Radio is estimated to reach more than 1 million listeners in Iran.

The phone connection was routed through Europe, according to The Associated Press, because the two countries have no direct link.

Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, President Mark J. Joffe, Executive Editor and Publisher Lisa Hostein, Editor

Michael S. Arnold, Managing Editor Lenore A. Silverstein, Finance and Administration Director Paula Simmonds, Marketing and Development Director

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.

Arafat opted for violence. But his strategy imploded. No Arab states joined the struggle, the international community did not step in and Israel made no political concessions.

On the contrary, the upshot was a discredited Arafat and a devastated Palestinian economy.

Moreover, after Al-Qaida's Sept. 11 attacks in the United States, Palestinian terrorism became associated with international terrorism, and Israel was allowed unprecedented freedom of action against the terrorists. Sharon was able to reoccupy Palestinian cities and to embark on a policy of liquidating Hamas terrorist leaders with little international protest.

Mahmoud Abbas, who became P.A. prime minister in April, led the post-Oslo policy alternative, denouncing Arafat's "militarization" of the intifada as a huge strategic mistake that played into Israel's hands.

Instead, Abbas advocated a strategy of dialogue based on the road map, coupled with American pressure on Israel.

Regional developments since Oslo further weakened the Palestinian position. Most significantly, the threat of a powerful "Eastern front" against Israel — made up of Iraq, Syria and Jordan — collapsed. In 1994, a year after Oslo, Jordan made peace with Israel, while Saddam Hussein's ouster in April removed Iraq and left Syria isolated, surrounded by American or pro-American forces in Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and Israel.

Other developments also worked in Israel's favor. Israel's close relationship with Turkey, developed in the wake of the Oslo process, has survived the intifada; U.S. control of Iraqi oil means a significant decline in the weight of the Arab oil card, and the weakness of the Arab League reflects a decline in the sense of a collective Arab identity.

For the Palestinians, these factors add up to a loss of their "Arab hinterland" and a growing sense of isolation.

Indeed, the Palestinians have had to turn to Iran for arms and financial aid. In January 2002, the Karine A, a ship carrying arms from Iran to the Palestinian Authority, was intercepted by Israel.

Today, according to Israeli intelligence sources, Iranian Revolutionary Guards based in Lebanon are transferring arms and funds to Hamas.

Ironically, a decade after Oslo, a non-Arab country — Iran — poses the most serious strategic threat to Israel, promoting Palestinian terror and developing nuclear and other nonconventional weapons with missiles capable of reaching Israel.

For Israel, the American war in Iraq has a crucial bearing. If, over time, the Americans are seen to have won, it will be a major blow to all radical forces in the Middle East. But if they lose, Israel could find itself confronting buoyant radicals from all over the region.

Either way, one thing is certain: Israel's strategic alliance with the United States has become much stronger in the wake of Oslo — a process in which, initially, the Americans were not even involved.

Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.

Russian synagogue wants you

MOSCOW (JTA) — Jews in a former "autonomous Jewish region" established by Stalin launched an international fund-raising campaign to build the region's first-ever synagogue.

In a letter signed by Mordechai Scheiner, the first resident rabbi in the region's history, and Lev Toitman, the community's chairman, the leaders of Birobidzhan's estimated 4,000 Jews called on Jewish philanthropists in Russia and abroad to help raise \$150,000.

The money is needed to complete the construction of a \$600,000 complex that will include a synagogue, Hebrew school and soup kitchen.

The expected participation of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in festivities surrounding Birobidzhan's 70th anniversary next year prompted local authorities to agree to the synagogue, and officials allocated \$112,000 toward it. The future synagogue is believed to be the first in Russia to be constructed partly with federal funds.

JEWISH WORLD

British-Iranian tensions rising

Iranian-British tensions continue to rise following the arrest in Britain of an Iranian diplomat accused of anti-Jewish terrorism.

Iran withdrew its ambassador from Britain on Tuesday, and shots were fired at the British Embassy in Tehran on Wednesday. Iran is furious over the arrest of Hade Soleimanpour, Iran's ambassador to Argentina at the time of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center, which killed 85 people and wounded 200.

Federation meeting postponed

The meeting of the Jewish federation system's Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee was postponed.

The group, which determines allocations to the federation system's overseas partners, such as the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, has postponed its September meeting to Dec. 8 in New York, said the chairman of ONAD, Steven Klinghoffer.

The new date, which is tentative, was changed at the request of several federations that had difficulties with the timing, Klinghoffer said.

Go directly to jail

An Austrian man will spend a year in jail for distributing leaflets denying the Holocaust.

The remainder of his three-year sentence was suspended. The man, identified as Wolfgang F., was convicted Wednesday of circulating leaflets denying that the Nazis used gas chambers to kill Jews during the Holocaust and arguing that the gas chambers at concentration camps had been built after the war.

Police to tour Shoah museum

The U.S. is expanding a program that brings lawenforcement officials to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The program uses a visit to the museum to teach police officers and other law enforcement officials about ethics and responsibility.

The U.S. Department of Justice gave the Anti-Defamation League \$100,000 to expand the program — currently attended by police officers in the Washington area and by new FBI agents — to three additional cities next year.

Fake bomb near Russian shul

A fake bomb attached to an anti-Semitic sign was found near a Russian synagogue.

The anti-Semitic sign, along with a device with wires sticking out of it, was found Tuesday near the Novgorod shul in northwestern Russia, the RIAN news agency and the Anti-Defamation League's Moscow office reported.

Congress returns to a full plate of issues related to Middle East

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A summer of bloodshed has stalled President Bush's "road map" to Israeli-Palestinian peace, and Jewish groups and lawmakers want the White House back in the driver's seat.

As Congress returned this week from its summer recess, the Israel Policy Forum and others worried that other priorities — including lingering fighting in Iraq and Bush's re-election campaign — would move the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a back burner. "The question is what the administration wants to do and how hard it wants to push," said M.J. Rosenberg, IPF's policy director. "It's a call the administration is going to have to make."

Many lawmakers who traveled to the Middle East over the summer break believe increased U.S. pressure on the Palestinian Authority is key to stemming violence, which peaked with an Aug. 19 bus bombing in Jerusalem that killed 21 people.

Already, lawmakers have signed letters urging the White House to reconsider its statements critical of the security fence Israel is building to keep terrorists from infiltrating from the West Bank. Palestinians say portions of the fence jut into territory they claim as their own.

Lawmakers also talk of adding a provision to the foreign aid spending bill, currently in conference committee, to stop the White House from deducting certain costs of the security fence from the \$9 billion in loan guarantees the United States recently agreed to give Israel.

The White House appears to have backed away from its threat to subtract the fence expenses, but congressional officials are keeping their options open in case administration policy changes.

Lawmakers also remain concerned about the continuing support for Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in Palestinian areas. U.S. policy has been to marginalize Arafat.

Representatives from both parties who traveled to the Middle East last month with a foundation associated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee were disappointed to see a picture of Arafat on the wall of the office of the P.A. prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas.

But supporters of Israel are heartened by recent White House comments calling for the Palestinians to dismantle terrorist organizations and consolidate security forces under Abbas, which would remove a major source of Arafat's power.

Beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, lawmakers are looking at several other regional issues. One is the expansion of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which Congress reauthorized in 2001 for five years. The legislation calls for sanctions against foreign companies investing in the energy sectors of Iran and Libya, making it harder for them to do business in the United States.

A new bill, backed by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), the chairwoman of the House International Relations Committee's Middle East panel, would increase enforcement of the sanctions and tighten loopholes that have allowed some companies to go unpunished for doing business with those countries.

Supporters say the increased enforcement would bring the legislation closer to its original goal of leveling the playing field for American energy companies, which are forbidden to do business with Iran and Libya.

Ros-Lehtinen also is expected to lead a series of hearings this month on the Syria Accountability Act, which would sanction Syria for its support of terrorist groups and its attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction. The bill has enough support to pass Congress but is being held up by opposition from the White House, which frequently rejects foreign policy legislation that it believes ties its hands.

The White House is believed to be using the threat of support for the Syria legislation in discussions with the Syrian regime about reforming its behavior.

In addition, a Middle East subcommittee hearing set for Sept. 10 will explore Saudi Arabia's ties to terrorism financing. \Box

ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Two Jews killed in 1920 remembered in Ukraine ceremony

By Daniel MacIsaac

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — A small ceremony in a Ukrainian shtetl has helped to bring closure to a remarkable tale of courage and martyrdom.

Israel Friedlander and Rabbi Bernard Cantor were executed 83 years ago by Soviet troops after crossing from Poland into Ukraine as part of a post-World War I mission to the region initiated by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The two finally were properly laid to rest in the shtetl of Yarmolinsky on Aug. 27, as members of their families prayed over their recently discovered gravestones.

Friedlander and Cantor's story began in the chaos following World War I and the Russian Revolution, when the JDC raised funds and launched a mission to bring relief to the Jews of Eastern Europe.

Friedlander, 43, a Polish-born American, Conservative Jew and Zionist, was among the small group of Jewish leaders who formed the JDC's first executive committee. He returned to his native Poland the following year to help carry out the relief campaign.

Accompanying him was Cantor, a Reform rabbi and social worker, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College who worked at the Free Synagogue in New York.

In July 1920, the pair crossed the Polish frontier en route to Kiev, a major center of Jewish life.

But they never arrived: They were captured in Yarmolinsky and shot as "Polish spies" on July 10.

The murders shocked American Jewry and embarrassed the Soviet authorities, who later apologized.

"The story of Friedlander and Cantor — of their murders in 1920, and of the rediscovery of their graves 80 years later — is a sobering reminder of the strength of the ties that bind Jews to one another," the JDC said in a statement, describing the effort that found the grave sites near the regional capital of Khmelnitsky in 2000.

The JDC arranged for the transfer of Friedlander's remains to Israel the following year, and brought a group of eight descendants back to Ukraine for a commemoration ceremony.

It was the combined effort of two present-day JDC officials — New York-based researcher Michael Beizer and Igor Ratushny, director of the JDC Becht Hesed welfare center in Khmelnitsky—who helped uncover the graves in an abandoned, overgrown cemetery.

More help from the JDC followed. Israel Agranat, Friedlander's grandson and a professor of chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said the former executive director of the JDC, Ralph Goldman, was instrumental, along with Rabbi Uri Miller of the Jerusalem Burial Society, in having Friedlander's remains brought to Israel and in arranging for the families to make their own trip to Ukraine this year.

Friedlander left behind a wife and six children in the United States. Soon after his death, they immigrated to Palestine.

His only surviving child, Carmel Agranat — Israel Agranat's mother — was still alive when his remains were brought to Israel

in 2001. They were interred in the family plot on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem.

"It was my mother's dream to have him buried there — and you have to understand the context," said Aharon Agranat, another of Carmel's sons. "She had said goodbye to her father when he left New York for Poland, and she never saw him again. That had been like a wound for her that hadn't closed all those years — and I think the burial in Jerusalem was the completion of a circle."

Israel Agranat said another wish of their mother's also was realized: Friedlander's gravestone on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem is an unusually shaped obelisk, identical to the one uncovered in Yarmolinsky.

Verses from Proverbs adorn it, including: "Lived for his people; Died for his people."

In some ways, Cantor's story is even more tragic. Just 28 years old and engaged to be married at the time of his murder, he left no direct descendants.

It was two great-nephews, Warren and Stuart Grover, who traveled to Ukraine for the Aug. 27 dedication.

Still, Cantor did leave his wishes behind. Writing to his fiancee in 1920 before making the fateful journey to Kiev, he expressed some of his fears for the mission, as well as his hopes for the future.

"If I should die, it is nothing; if I am forgotten, it is nothing; if only the Jews remember the cause for which I die," he wrote in the letter, which was included in a commemorative book presented at a 1920 Carnegie Hall ceremony to honor the pair.

It appears that Jews have remembered them.

Friedlander's great-granddaughter, Roberta Louis, director of distance learning at the Siegal College of Judaic Studies in Glencoe, Ill., read aloud letters of commemoration at the Yarmolinsky ceremony. The letters included ones from the Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College.

So much good "has come out of this mission, and not just for our families," said Louis, referring to a cultural fund set up in Friedlander's name at the Khmelnitsky Hesed center, as well as to a scholarship fund created by the Agranat family.

"What was really their vision?" Louis asked. "Strengthening Jewish life. And 83 years later, they're still strengthening Jewish life."

Lawmaker: Lift Jackson-Vanik

WASHINGTON (JTA) — President Bush should remove trade restrictions on Russia that were linked to Jewish emigration, a U.S. legislator said.

Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) said Tuesday that lifting the Jackson-Vanik Amendment before Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet later this month would be a way to recognize the changes in Russia since the end of Communist rule.

The 1974 amendment ties Russia's most-favored-nation trading status with the United States to permission for Russian Jews to emigrate.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been given a waiver each year from Jackson-Vanik's emigration requirements. Jewish groups in the United States and Russia generally are supportive of Russia's "graduation" from Jackson-Vanik but want assurances that Russia will work to ensure human rights freedoms and fight against anti-Semitism if the measure is lifted.