

**SPECIAL INTERVIEW  
EDUCATION DEPT. OFFICIAL SAYS  
THAT MAILING TO JEWISH SCHOOLS  
OF HIS SPEECH DECRYING GODLESSNESS  
IN THE U.S. WAS INSENSITIVE**  
By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Robert Billings, the Education Department official who authored a speech lamenting that godlessness had taken over a once "Christian" United States, acknowledged today that the Department was insensitive to its Jewish constituents when the speech was inadvertently mailed to Jewish schools in six western states.

Billings, the Department's director of regional liaison, however, affirmed the Department prerogative to distribute and circulate through the use of federal funds information to various constituent groups that would be of interest to them.

"It is wrong to send any kind of speech to constituent groups," Billings said in a telephone interview from Washington with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in New York. This particular speech, mailed from the Department's regional office in Denver to Jewish schools, demonstrated "an insensitivity" to the Department's Jewish constituents, Billings said.

Jewish organizations complained to the Education Department that the speech, sent out by Tom Tancredo, the Department's regional representative in Denver, to Christian educators, conflicted with the constitutional guarantee of church-state separation and that it was insulting to the American Jewish community.

**Apology To The American Jewish Congress**

Last week the Department issued a formal apology to the American Jewish Congress, saying the Department "regrets that this action gave offense to some members of the general public, including your constituents." The apology, written by Thomas Moore, deputy assistant secretary for public affairs, and addressed to AJCongress executive director Henry Siegman, said:

"Certain language contained in the speech, particularly the reference to a 'Christian nation', does show an insensitivity to the very real and legitimate concerns which have been expressed. Had this office been consulted, this particular speech would not have been distributed."

Rep. Pat Schroeder (D. Col.), meanwhile, complained to the Education Department that it was inappropriate for the Department to use federal funds for mailing a speech extolling a "Christian" nation, and called for a Postal Service investigation. Aides to Schroeder said she will continue to pursue the matter despite Moore's apology.

**Surprised The Speech Was Mailed Out**

Billings recalled today that he had delivered the speech some five years ago to a conference of Christian Baptist educators meeting in North Carolina. At the time he was a Moral Majority official.

He said that at least two years ago, Tancredo contacted Billings, his superior, and asked whether

he had any speeches he had delivered in the past. He said he gave Tancredo the 12-page speech that was eventually distributed and would have given him a couple of others, although he could not recall the exact number.

Billings said he was surprised that Tancredo had, after two years, used the speech in a mailing to Christian educators. While he said he did not feel there was anything inappropriate with mailing information to constituents, "it would be wrong" if the views contained in the speech were those of the Federal government.

In the speech, Billings lamented that "godlessness is now controlling every aspect of our society." Citing legal actions against some church schools, he asked, "How can these things be happening in America, this land of freedom, this Christian nation."

**Says He Should Have Used A Different Phrase**

Billings said today that instead of using the phrase "Christian nation," he may have been "smarter" to have said a "biblical nation," and that what he was stressing for a return to "Judeo-Christian ethics."

Billings also sought to clarify the characterization, contained in an earlier JTA article, that he received a doctorate from a correspondence school in Tennessee that had since been shut down by state officials after being dubbed a "diploma mill."

According to Billings, the school, Clarksville School of Theology, was an accredited school when he applied to do graduate work. He said that he was involved in missionary field work and it was necessary that he study through a correspondence school. He said that it was after he had left the school that the institution lost its accreditation and later was forced to close its doors.

**IDF CONTINUES SEARCHING VILLAGES  
IN AREAS WHERE THERE HAVE BEEN  
INCREASING ATTACKS AGAINST THE IDF**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The Israeli Defense Force today continued its searches of Lebanese Shiite Moslem villages in the area east of Tyre where there have been a rising number of attacks against Israeli soldiers recently.

Meanwhile, inside Israel, two Katyusha rockets or mortar shells were lobbed into the Golan Heights last night. They fell near a settlement in the southern part of the Heights, apparently fired from a point near where the Israeli-Syrian and Jordanian borders meet. There was no damage.

Military sources said a Syrian village near the border was known to be under the control of Palestinians, and while they said Syria was responsible for maintaining order in the village, the terrorists may have adopted the habit of slipping across the Jordan border to fire their missiles from there and then returning home, so that Damascus could disclaim responsibility.

According to United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) spokesmen, the Israeli searches today were carried out in the villages of Deir Khaneoun, A-Nahar, Bittar and Deir Taba. Male villagers were ordered into the village square or school-yards, where

they were searched and questioned. Searches were carried out in houses and community centers and mosques, as both the latter have previously been used for storing arms. The Israeli army spokesman said that one man was killed and two wounded when they tried to escape from one of the villages being searched. During the operations, 13 houses in which arms caches were found were destroyed.

The curfew on Arab Selim village continued today for the third day, while South Lebanon Army (SLA) troops continued to carry out an intensive search.

#### Cooperative Lebanese Allowed To Settle In Israel

Meanwhile, a number of Lebanese who have cooperated with the IDF have been permitted to enter Israel and settle here. They were afraid of reprisals in the wake of the withdrawing Israelis. In the past year some 60 collaborators have been murdered, 20 of them in Sidon, where assassinations have increased since last Saturday's pullback.

Lebanese who have cooperated with the IDF are being informed in advance of each local withdrawal, to give them time to make their arrangements.

Likud-Herut Knesset member Uzi Landau told the Knesset yesterday that Israel had a "moral obligation" to stand behind its friends and those who support its position. His motion for aid to such people is to be discussed by the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

#### PERES SAYS ISRAEL WOULD WELCOME A VISIT BY HUSSEIN

ROME, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres of Israel ended his two-day visit here yesterday by telling a news conference that Israel would welcome a visit by King Hussein of Jordan. He also offered to go to Jordan for peace talks.

"I am sure Israel would like to see King Hussein, would like him to come to Jerusalem, to announce whatever he has on his mind," just as President Anwar Sadat of Egypt did when he came to Jerusalem in 1978 and addressed the Knesset, Peres said.

The Israeli Premier, who appeared at the news conference with Premier Bettino Craxi of Italy, rejected the idea that the Soviet Union could play a positive role in helping to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and downplayed the importance of the U.S.-Soviet talks on the Mideast which took place in Vienna on Tuesday.

"Why should we negotiate an Israeli problem with a country that does not recognize Israel itself?" Peres said. He also reiterated Israel's rejection of an international conference, which would include the USSR, on the Mideast. "We are not looking for a show. We are looking for a dialogue."

Regarding the Palestinians, Peres said "There is a need to find a solution to the Palestinian problem by diplomatic means and not by military means." He said the situation was more complicated "than it appears just by the slogans or the headlines."

During his visit to Rome, Peres met with Pope John Paul II, becoming the second Israeli Premier to meet with a Pontiff. Premier Golda Meir met with Pope Paul VI in 1973. Peres said yesterday that Israel would welcome diplomatic relations with the Vatican. He said this would "contribute to the betterment of relations between the Christian and the Jewish communities."

Peres did not raise the issue of recognition when he met with the Pope on Tuesday, and the meeting did not change the Vatican's position on Mideast issues. But Israeli officials were reportedly pleased with the tone of the meeting. The Israeli leader left yesterday for Bucharest for meetings with President Nicolae Ceausescu.

#### BEGIN INDICATES HE MIGHT RETURN TO ACTIVE POLITICS By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Former Israeli Premier Menachem Begin was quoted here tonight as saying there was a likelihood that he would return to active politics, but that he had not finally decided on a date.

In an interview to appear in tomorrow's Jewish Chronicle, Begin also spoke freely on a number of Mideast issues, including Lebanon, and possible new peace talks.

He declared himself unhappy over present Israeli government policy on troop withdrawals from Lebanon; flatly opposed PLO chairman Yasir Arafat's participation in negotiations; and said talks with Jordan should be held only in the framework of Camp David.

Chronicle foreign editor Joseph Finklestone, who interviewed Begin by telephone from London, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency tonight that the former Premier sounded well and cheerful, even giving the occasional chuckle. Begin, 71, has spent the past three years living in seclusion in a Jerusalem apartment, reportedly suffering from depression at the death of his wife.

The 15-minute interview followed Israeli press reports that Begin was contemplating a political comeback. Finklestone said he gained the impression that Begin was serious about such a move which, if it happened, would be reminiscent of the late David Ben Gurion's return to politics from retirement in a Negev kibbutz.

#### TWO JEWISH TENNIS PLAYERS TO REPRESENT U.S. IN DAVIS CUP MATCHES IN JAPAN MARCH 8-10 By Haskell Cohen

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Two Jewish tennis players, Elliot Telscher and Aaron Krickstein, have been selected to represent the United States in the opening round of singles competition against the Japanese Davis Cup representatives in matches to be held in Japan March 8-10.

This marks the second time in 34 years that two Jewish tennis stars have been chosen to participate, jointly, in Davis Cup matches against foreign competition. In 1951, Dick Savitt, a Wimbledon tournament champion, and Herb Flam of California, were the Americans who played, coincidentally, against the Japanese Davis Cup representatives at the Boat Club in Louisville, Kentucky. Both Savitt and Flam won their respective matches and the U.S. team went on to defeat Japan 5-0 in the series.

The 27-year-old Telscher, currently ranked ninth in the world, has represented the U.S. in the Maccabiah Games. He earned more than \$250,000 in tournament competition in 1984. Krickstein, meanwhile, at the age of 18, is ranked 12th internationally. A native of Michigan, he earned \$187,519. One of the youngest players in international tennis circles, he is the grandson of a rabbi.

Still another Jewish nationally-ranked tennis player, Brad Gilbert, will be on the American team but

will not be eligible to play against the Japanese team. He will be available to volley and scrimmage with Telscher and Krickstein.

#### STATE DEPT. SAYS U.S.-USSR TALKS CLARIFIED EACH SIDE'S POLICIES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21 (JTA) — The State Department said today that two days of talks about the Middle East by the United States and the Soviet Union in Vienna were "useful in clarifying each side's policies and positions."

But State Department deputy spokesman Edward Djerejian reiterated again that the 10 hours of meetings between Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, and Vladimir Polyakov, head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Near Eastern Division, were not attempts "to reach any agreements or understandings." He added that "no follow-on was planned."

The U.S. has repeatedly stressed that the Vienna meetings, which were held alternatively between the U.S. and Soviet Embassies there, were "exchanges of views" aimed at a clarification of the position of the two governments to "help avoid miscalculations and reduce the potential risk of U.S.-Soviet confrontation."

#### Details Won't Be Made Public

Djerejian said no details will be made public of the discussions. But it was learned that the U.S. did stress to the Soviet Union that if Moscow wanted to play a role in the Middle East peace process one of the necessary first steps is for it to have diplomatic relations with Israel as well as to improve conditions for Jews in the Soviet Union, including allowing increased emigration to Israel.

Administration sources also stated that the Soviets, as expected, raised their proposal for an international conference on the Middle East which would include the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute. But the U.S., which rejects the international conference, reiterated the need for direct negotiations between the parties involved based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

Djerejian said the U.S. raised all the subjects it said it would bring up at the Vienna meeting. This included the Arab-Israel conflict, the Iran-Iraq war, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

But sources said that while the U.S. raised the issue of Afghanistan, the Soviets listened but did not reply on the ground that Polyakov's department did not cover Afghanistan.

#### More Information Sought On Hussein-Arafat Accord

Meanwhile, Djerejian indicated the U.S. is still waiting for more information about the agreement between King Hussein of Jordan and Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat on cooperating for negotiations. The agreement has now received an ambiguous approval from the PLO's executive committee in Tunis.

"If what has been agreed upon constitutes agreement for direct negotiations with Israel on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 242 we would see it as a positive step," Djerejian said.

He also repeated an earlier statement that 242 "applies to all fronts and that obviously includes the Golan Heights." When Djerejian first made this statement last week while King Fahd of Saudi

Arabia was in Washington it was seen as an effort to encourage Syria to participate in the peace process or at least not block any Jordanian-PLO agreement as it has been trying to do.

#### ARMY SETS UP UNIT TO TRACK MENGELE

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The Army announced yesterday that Secretary of the Army John Marsh has set up a high level task force to help the Justice Department track down fugitive Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele. The task force will be headed by the Army's Deputy General Counsel, Darrell Peck. The announcement came a day after Lt. Gen. William Odum, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, was criticized by a Senate subcommittee for not having sought further information on the Mengele case on his own initiative. (See February 20 Bulletin.)

#### IRELAND'S JEWS SEEKING TO BAR ENTRY OF DUTCH NAZI WAR CRIMINAL

AMSTERDAM, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The Jewish community in Ireland is seeking to bar Dutch Nazi war criminal Pieter Menten from entering that country after his release from prison in Holland at the end of next month.

Menten, described as a multimillionaire art dealer, was sentenced in 1980 to 10 years' imprisonment for complicity in the murders of 20 Jewish and other residents of the Polish village of Podhorodoze in July, 1941. The years he spent in detention before and during his prolonged trial were deducted from the sentence. He is now 85.

Menten owns a country home in County Waterford, Ireland, said to be filled with art treasures, many of which may have been looted from Jews in Holland during the Nazi occupation. It is believed he plans to settle there because his luxurious villa in Blaricum, east of Amsterdam, was set on fire several years ago and is not habitable.

According to reports from Dublin, Ben Briscoe, an opposition Member of Parliament, has urged Parliament and the government not to admit Menten to Ireland.

#### RABBINATE INSISTS ETHIOPIAN JEWS MUST UNDERGO SYMBOLIC CONVERSION

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The Chief Rabbinate has overturned a ruling by the former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ovadia Yosef, recognizing Ethiopian Jews as such without their having to undergo symbolic conversion by immersion in a mikve (ritual bath).

Israel's incumbent Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Mordechai Eliahu, was abroad Tuesday when the Chief Rabbinate upheld its previous insistence that symbolic conversion was mandatory for the thousands of Ethiopian Jews who have immigrated to Israel in recent months. But an earlier demand that a drop of blood be drawn from each Ethiopian male to symbolize circumcision was withdrawn.

The Ethiopian emigres, who are devoutly observant, reacted angrily to both demands, which they considered degrading, insulting and a sign of doubt as to their authenticity as Jews. The Sephardic rabbinate has been more lenient to the Ethiopians than the Ashkenazic or Western Orthodox rabbis. Yosef told a conference of Ethiopians Sunday that "if the Ashkenazim rejected them, the Sephardim would take them into their midst."

# OPPONENTS TO ORDINATION OF WOMEN AS RABBIS PROTEST RA ANNOUNCEMENT

By Aviva Cantor

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) — Opponents to the ordination of women as rabbis — both within and outside the Conservative movement — have come forward to protest the announcement last week by the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) that it had cleared the way for the acceptance of its first female member, Amy Eilberg, upon her graduation from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America's Rabbinical School in May. (See the Feb. 19 issue of the Daily News Bulletin).

The Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism, a group of rabbis and laity who oppose women's ordination in the Conservative movement, said that the passage of an amendment to the RA constitution — which guarantees the acceptance of women by mandating the automatic admission of each entire JTS graduating class — "should not be seen as a wholehearted endorsement" of women as rabbis.

The group's co-chairman, Rabbi David Novak, claimed that 30 percent of the RA membership voted against the amendment. (In the mail ballot, 267 members out of 903 voted against the amendment, but 247 did not cast ballots at all.) Had this percentage of numbers voted according to the original procedure, which required a 75 percent vote for the acceptance of individual members rather than a simple majority, the admission of women into the RA would have been "precluded," Novak said.

He noted that many RA members voted for the amendment because "its wording ostensibly made it a question of loyalty" to the JTS. But, he added, "We know for a fact that a considerable segment of them share our reservations about the halachic validity of women's ordination."

## Termed A 'Definitive' Break With Judaism

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations condemned the RA decision as representing a "radical and definitive break with Jewish tradition, shattering all claims and pretenses that the Conservative movement is a branch of halachic Judaism."

Charging that the decision is part of the movement's "continuing breach with traditional Judaism," Union president Sidney Kwestel called it "religion by popular demand, a pandering to pressure groups" that "further obliterates the distinction between the Conservative and Reform movements" in the U.S.

The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada, whose president is halachist Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, expressed the view that no woman, "even Orthodox," can serve as a rabbi according to Jewish law, which, he said, Reform and Conservative movements "have done everything to break down."

But Rabbi Hersch Ginsberg, the group's director, said that even the men ordained as Conservative and Reform rabbis are not real rabbis, "and their marriages, divorces and conversions are invalid." He cited Feinstein's statement that "it is a serious violation even to pray in a Reform or Conservative temple."

## A 'Potentially Divisive' Move

Rabbi Avraham Weiss, spiritual leader of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at Stern College, the women's undergraduate college of Yeshiva University,

called the RA decision "potentially divisive" but did not condemn it outright. He split the functions of rabbi into two parts. One part involves those aspects of the rabbinate that, he said, are halachically closed to women: serving as witnesses and as religious arbiters, and leading public prayer. Because these are forbidden to women, he said, a conversion by a Bet Din (religious court) in which a woman rabbi participates would be unacceptable to Orthodox rabbis and many Conservative rabbis, as well.

However, there are aspects of the rabbinate which constitute what he called the "major part of a rabbi's duties — teaching of Torah and counseling — that women can fully participate in on the same level as men."

Weiss, who serves as rabbi and advisor to many Orthodox women's services in the tri-state area, expressed the hope that the Orthodox movement will initiate a course of study leading to a new title for women who would carry out these roles of teacher and counselor "on an equal level with men."

## MORE THAN 20,000 DONORS CONTRIBUTE \$3.1 MILLION TO JDC FAMINE RELIEF

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) — The response of the American public to the dire need of the millions of people affected by the famine in sub-Saharan Africa has been "an expression of compassion and concern of all Americans, Jew and Gentile, white and Black, and has been a milestone in intercommunal relations," according to Heinz Eppler, president of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

According to JDC executive vice president Ralph Goldman, donations for Ethiopian Relief from more than 20,000 individuals, corporations, foundations and Jewish communities have amounted to \$1.7 million in cash and \$1.4 million in goods, totaling \$3.1 million since the agency opened its mailbox for this purpose three months ago, on November 1.

Goldman said 86.5 tons of goods have been shipped including blankets, clothing, cloth, medicines and medical supplies. He noted that Alitalia Airlines is continuing its generous cooperation with JDC by donating air transport for vital supplies such as medicines on its flights from New York to Rome. Goldman said the supplies are then sent by air freight to Addis Ababa, where they are distributed "under JDC staff supervision."

Goldman added that JDC has purchased two four-wheel drive vehicles to facilitate the distribution of medical supplies in the Gondar region. "The fact that many of the villagers of the area are a one or two-day walk from the nearest dirt roads continues to be a major logistical obstacle to relief distribution," he said.

Eppler lauded the efforts of the many individuals across America "who have taken the initiative in bringing people of diverse backgrounds together to help the people in Ethiopia." He specifically mentioned New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, whose telethon raised \$220,000 which was shared by the Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service (Protestant) and the JDC.

"The response from American Jews," he added, "has also been heartening. Contributions have come from old and young. Small children have sent their pocket money and poor, elderly Jews have pooled the little they have to contribute." Goldman cited a recent report from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization to the effect that the famine in Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan countries is expected to continue through 1985. The report estimates the number of people affected as between 7.5 and 10 million.