

**JEWS SAY U.S. SHOULD NOT DISPENSE AID TO PALESTINIANS FROM JERUSALEM**

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, June 22 (JTA) -- Jewish groups and members of Congress are seeking to squelch the possibility that U.S. aid to Palestinians could be dispensed from eastern Jerusalem.

The United States will decide in the coming weeks where to open an Agency for International Development office that will be responsible for dispensing up to \$78 million for infrastructure and other developmental assistance to the newly autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho district.

Widespread rumors continue to circulate around Washington that the State Department is considering an eastern Jerusalem location for this effort, perhaps at the U.S. Consulate there.

Officials have refused to confirm or deny such reports. The official word is that State Department personnel are "still working on the administrative arrangements for an AID mission" and "hope to finalize some details in the very near future," according to a spokesperson.

But some members of Congress and many Jewish leaders fear that an AID office in eastern Jerusalem would buttress Palestinian claims to Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. They are consequently trying to nip in the bud any notion of a site there for the AID office.

"This proposal only serves to prejudge the future status of Jerusalem by drawing a political connection between Jerusalem and the self-rule regions," Reps. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), Robert Andrews (D-N.J.) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) said in a joint statement this week.

Israeli Embassy officials refused to comment on the AID controversy but privately have said all countries wanting to deal with the Palestinian authority were being told they would have to do so in Jericho and Gaza.

**AID Office Site Caused 'Deep Disquiet'**

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee issued a statement concerning the flap about the AID office saying, "AIPAC is unequivocally opposed to any action that would have a negative impact on or erode Jerusalem's status as Israel's undivided capital."

In a letter to President Clinton, Seymour Reich, president of the American Zionist Movement, expressed his opposition to an AID office in Jerusalem: "The idea of an office in East Jerusalem for aid to Jericho raises serious questions and deep disquiet about American policy in the region."

Gail Pressberg, co-director of the Washington office of Americans for Peace Now, disagreed with the assertion that an AID office in eastern Jerusalem would affect final-status talks.

"The location in and of itself does not set precedent. Where the office is says nothing about U.S. policy on Jerusalem. The policy is set in the White House and in Congress," she said.

She added the issue "has been made from a mole hill into a mountain."

Under the declaration of principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization last fall, the fate of Jerusalem is reserved for final-status negotiations that are at least two years away.

But the highly sensitive issue has come to the fore recently, especially since a speech given last month by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in which he called for a "jihad" for Jerusalem.

**BEILIN SPARKS CONTROVERSY YET AGAIN AT WEIZMAN'S ISRAEL-DIASPORA MEETING**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 22 (JTA) -- Israeli President Ezer Weizman this week opened to mixed reviews a much-anticipated two-day international conference on the changing relationship between Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

While participants praised the initiative, executed in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, some privately expressed cynicism that anything meaningful could be achieved with the large crowd and the packed agenda.

"I'm not sure the format lends itself to the kind of exploration that the serious subject of the future of the Jewish family deserves," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"This will probably not lead to conclusions but will be a launching pad for this (kind of) exploration," he said.

Some also criticized the dearth of young people and the absence of representatives of the opposition to the Israeli Labor-led government. The organizers said they had invited such representatives but were turned down.

No one could complain, however, for a lack of controversy at the conference. That was provided, perhaps characteristically, by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin.

In his remarks, Beilin called for establishing a new international Jewish body to replace the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization, which are holding their annual conventions here this week and next.

The existing partnership "tools" between Israeli and Diaspora Jews are anachronistic, he charged, echoing arguments he has made repeatedly in recent months.

The difference was that at the conference he outlined his vision of an alternative partnership institution.

He called for a democratic, voluntary membership organization, called Beit Yisrael. Its mandate would be to fund in full visits by all Diaspora Jewish youth to Israel, to support Jewish education in the Diaspora and to support aliyah. He also called for a census of Jews in the Diaspora to identify and reach out to unaffiliated Jews.

Beilin's remarks provoked a sharp response.

Jewish Agency Board of Governors Chairman Mendel Kaplan remarked later that Beilin's proposal was "based on ignorance."

"He insulted his audience by not doing his

homework and by shooting from the hip," said Kaplan. "His ideas don't merit discussion."

The highest priorities of the Jewish Agency today are precisely the priorities outlined by Beilin in his proposal, said Norman Lipoff, an American member of the Jewish Agency's Executive. Also, there is a census already underway, he said, adding that Beilin's proposal was "simplistic and somewhat irresponsible."

Yehiel Leket, acting chairman of the Jewish Agency and WZO, dismissed Beilin's idea as "not serious." He said his organization has a mandate decided by a Knesset law and a special covenant with the government of Israel.

"I respect Yossi Beilin in political matters," said Leket. "He has a deep understanding of the Palestinians, (but) not much understanding of the Jews."

At the conference, more than 200 intellectuals and organizational leaders sweltered in the heat under a big tent in the back yard of the president's residence.

They listened to one speaker after another address the misperceptions each Jewry has of the other. And they heard various initiatives proposed to stave off the crisis of Jewish continuity in the Diaspora as well as of Jewish identity in Israel.

The first day's speakers included Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; Letty Cottin Pogrebin of Americans for Peace Now; Michael Walzer of Princeton University; Hebrew University Professor Steven M. Cohen; United Jewish Appeal Executive Vice President Rabbi Brian Lurie and former French Chief Rabbi Rene Samuel Sirat.

#### 'We Don't Live In Exile'

Weizman, who gave a rambling introductory address which disappointed and frustrated the invitees, made a persistent effort to enliven the proceedings by breaking in periodically to ask questions and press for an exchange with those in the audience.

Many of the participants said they welcomed the show of interest by the president, though they said it was clear he had very little understanding of the Diaspora.

"I am very happy this is taking place at the (home) of the president of Israel because it shows the Israel-Diaspora relationship doesn't belong to the World Zionist Organization and is the concern of the entire Israeli people," said Avram Infeld, president of the Melitz Center for Jewish Zionist Education in Jerusalem.

"At the same time, the president, by his own admission, has a total lack of knowledge and this is a wonderful opportunity to educate a very important leader," he said.

"For the first time we've heard Diaspora Jewry say loudly and clearly, 'See us the way we see ourselves and stop relating to us as something you imagine we are. We don't live in exile and we don't intend to come on aliyah,'" said Infeld.

Weizman, who has offended Diaspora leaders in the past for implying that a full Jewish life can be lived only in Israel, repeatedly and candidly confessed his ignorance and his desire and willingness to learn more about Diaspora life.

At the same time he defended his posture as head of a Zionist state whose purpose "through all the years was to in-gather all Jews back to Israel."

#### **JEWISH GROUPS REJECT RUSSIAN REQUEST TO PUSH FOR A REPEAL OF JACKSON-VANIK** By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, June 22 (JTA) -- American Jewish leaders turned down a request by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to help his country secure most-favored-nation trade status on a permanent basis.

At a meeting with the prime minister here on Tuesday, the dozen Jewish leaders told Chernomyrdin that they favor a continued waiver of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which for years barred the Soviet Union from the special trade status because of its policy on emigration. But the groups said they cannot support a move to permanently repeal the amendment at this time.

Though there has been substantial progress on the emigration front in recent years, there is still "more progress to be made before we can support repealing Jackson-Vanik," said Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

At the one-and-a-half hour meeting on Tuesday, the Jewish activists also discussed anti-Semitism and fascism in Russia.

The meeting is believed to mark the first time American Jewish groups met with senior Russian officials in Washington since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Former Congressman Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), co-author of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, also attended the meeting.

Rabbi Mark Staitman, NCSJ vice chairman, called the dialogue a "positive step."

"We all came out with a real sense of hope and optimism. While we certainly don't agree on everything, the difference in our positions is not a great one and can be bridged," Staitman said.

When asked about the rise in fascism in Russia, the prime minister said he does not believe fascist groups have any influence or determine any policies of the Russian government.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, asked the prime minister to protect houses of worship in Russia in light of recent attacks against Jewish institutions.

#### **HEBRON KILLER CALLED 'HOLY MARTYR'** By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, June 22 (JTA) -- The Israeli settler responsible for carrying out the Feb. 25 Hebron massacre is worthy of being designated a holy martyr, according to Kiryat Arba Rabbi Dov Lior.

Dr. Baruch Goldstein, who lived in the Kiryat Arba settlement located near Hebron, is "to be put on a par with the holy martyrs of the Holocaust" Lior told Israel Radio on Tuesday, because he was killed by Palestinians after he carried out the massacre.

Lior said that when a Jew is killed by non-Jews, one does not take into consideration the sins he may have committed because the manner of his death atones for whatever he may have done wrong during his life.

"Do we ask of the martyrs of the Holocaust what they did during their lifetime?" Lior said.

In a related development, the commission that was set up to probe the events surrounding the Feb. 25 killings is scheduled to deliver the final report of its findings on Sunday.

## HOUSTON FEDERATION EMBARKS ON PROJECT TO BRING SHABBAT TO THE UNAFFILIATED

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, June 22 (JTA) -- The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston is bringing a revolutionary guest to town this fall: the Sabbath Queen.

Taking a page from the outreach efforts of Lubavitch and other Orthodox groups, the federation is spearheading a community-wide effort in conjunction with the city's 20 synagogues to invite the "marginally affiliated" to celebrate Shabbat.

"Our goal is to mobilize the entire community to participate in some kind of Shabbat observance, minimally once a month," said Lee Wunsch, assistant executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

This plan may be the boldest example to date of the growing cooperation between synagogues and Jewish community federations, as issues of Jewish identity rise on the agenda of the American Jewish community.

It was conceived by Houston's Community Think Tank on Jewish Continuity, a body composed of representatives of the city's five largest synagogues and its five largest communal organizations, including the federation.

Like similar think tanks, task forces and commissions across the country, the Houston body was formed in the wake of the alarm generated by the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, with its report of a 52 percent intermarriage rate.

Beginning after the High Holidays in the fall, Houston's Jewish community -- which numbers about 45,000 -- will target one Shabbat a month for widespread participation.

The federation will be at the center of the program as coordinator and catalyst, budgeting \$90,000 for the 18-month project.

It will sponsor what Wunsch called "a major marketing effort to the community," in hopes of bringing in the "marginally affiliated, as well as those who are affiliated but have little Shabbat observance in their homes."

### Synagogue Will Be Program's Core

Federation agencies will play a key role in creating Sabbath programming for singles, the elderly and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

But it is the synagogue that will be at the core of the program. Synagogues throughout the city are being encouraged to match families unfamiliar with Shabbat observance with families who are familiar, and to make synagogue services that week accessible and welcoming to newcomers.

"One of the things we heard from rabbis is whatever we do with Jewish continuity needs to have a major synagogue component, major spiritual component," said Wunsch. "We felt that Shabbat was a tradition in Jewish life that was the easiest opportunity to try to re-engage people in religious observance."

It was also a way for the think tank to show that synagogues, the federation and its agencies can work together.

Traditionally, federations and synagogues in America have been separated by a wall akin to that separating church and state under the United States Constitution. Both sides were wary of the

other, with synagogues seeing federations as both competitors for money and as a secular substitute for religious affiliation.

Now, however, that divide is coming down.

In the wake of the 1990 population study, federations realized that raising funds for Israel and mobilizing support for endangered Jews have failed to ensure the affiliation of the next generation of American Jews.

This realization has opened the way for the spiritual values of the synagogue to be welcomed by federation leadership.

At the Houston think tank deliberations, said Rabbi Shaul Osadchey of Congregation Brith Shalom, everyone agreed about "the centrality of synagogues in revitalizing Jewish life."

"That in itself was a monumental affirmation, because it was not something the federation movement, and the institutions of the community, had really acknowledged in a way that they needed to," said Osadchey.

As in Houston, which considers this project only a demonstration, most communities' continuity efforts are only in the beginning stages.

So far, many have focused on initiating new Jewish identity programs through special grants.

Among the communities that have launched new citywide efforts are Washington, which is bringing its youth groups together to promote travel to Israel; and Boston, where the federation is subsidizing family educators in synagogues and will soon start offering intensive, synagogue-based classes designed to promote Jewish literacy.

### 'Shabbat Is What People Need To Do'

The idea for the Houston project came, appropriately enough, at a Shabbat dinner.

"They were coming up with one idea after another, all episodic things, not really connected to foundational events or activities in Jewish life," said Dr. Baruch Brody, a federation board member who was a consultant to the think tank.

"We were talking about it at the Friday night table, thinking this is all going to be a waste of time and money."

"Then my wife, Dina, said, 'Shabbat is what people need to do.' It relates to family life, to synagogue, to spirituality, all the things families are now talking about."

When he took the idea back to the think tank, the members liked it.

"There was a feeling in the community that Jewish continuity in America is now totally dependent upon religion, not ethnicity, so we once again promote the religious aspect of Jewishness," think tank member Rabbi Joseph Radinsky of United Orthodox Synagogues.

"There was a sense we needed to encourage a return to those kinds of practices that connect people most directly and deeply to the soul of Judaism," said Osadchey.

"Many of us are convinced there are a lot of people who would come back if they could overcome the intimidation of not knowing enough, so that's why there's an emphasis on teaching in workshops, on coming back at whatever level of teaching and observance there might be," he said.

"We're telling them to take another look, try again, come back, because we're convinced one of the missing components of their lives, the spiritual dimension, can be found in the synagogue," said Osadchey.

## ANTI-SEMITISM IN U.S. HAS DROPPED IN PAST 50 YEARS, NEW REPORT SAYS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, June 22 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitism in the United States has decreased appreciably in the past 50 years, and circumstances are not particularly ripe for its resurgence, concludes a new report published by the American Jewish Committee.

Written by Tom Smith, director of the General Social Survey at the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, "Anti-Semitism in Contemporary America" concentrates in particular on trends since the mid-1960s.

While not containing any new polling results, the report is based on a review of more than 140 scholarly studies of public attitudes toward Jews, including the results of two dozen national public opinion polls conducted since 1948.

Examining 15 possible indicators of anti-Semitism, the report concludes that three are not useful measures of change, and four show little change.

Six indicators show "direct or indirect decreases in anti-Semitism," according to the report. These include survey questions relating to stereotypes of Jews, how respondents feel about Jews, a willingness to vote for a Jewish president, approval of intermarriage and perceptions by non-Jews of changes in prejudice.

Three indicators show rises in anti-Semitism, which the report describes as "erratic, rather than indicating clear, linear trends."

"All three represent Jewish perspectives (Jewish perceptions of changes in prejudice, concerns about current and future anti-Semitism, and reports, presumably mostly by Jews, of anti-Semitic incidents to the ADL)" writes Smith, referring to the annual audit of anti-Semitism issued by the Anti-Defamation League.

Smith says the "scholarly consensus" in explaining this apparent inconsistency "is that Jews, for understandable reasons, overestimate the extent of anti-Semitism, its direction of change, and its potential for the future."

Acknowledging that "virulent anti-Semitism persists among fringe hate groups," the report concludes that it lacks a "critical mass" to become significant.

Nonetheless, anti-Semitism is not extinct.

"Jews are still recognized as an ethnic and religious out-group and are evaluated as such. While stereotypes have ebbed and social distance has narrowed, anti-Semitic prejudices still survive and anti-Semitic activities are all too common," the report concludes.

## GERMAN CHAMBER REJECTS BILL TO PENALIZE HOLOCAUST DENIAL

By Miriam Widman

BERLIN, June 22 (JTA) -- The Bundesrat, Germany's upper house of Parliament, has rejected a package of crime-fighting initiatives that included a measure that would make it easier to prosecute those who repeat the so-called "Auschwitz lie" and allow for prison terms of up to three years for such crimes.

But it appears that the rejection was based on the main crime-fighting components of the bill, not on the provisions dealing with neo-Nazi

activity. That same day, June 10, the same body approved a separate bill calling for penalties of up to five years for a similar, narrower legal definition of the "Auschwitz lie."

The term currently refers to the notion that Jews were not gassed at Auschwitz or that it was technically not possible to have gassed people there.

The Bundesrat agreed to forward the second bill to the Bundestag, the lower house of Parliament. Under German law, a proposed bill must go through three readings in the Bundestag and then be returned to the Bundesrat for final approval.

It is unlikely that the legislation will be passed before Parliament begins its summer break on July 8.

Stefan Schmidt-Meinecke, Bundesrat spokesman, said the initial legislation was not rejected because of its "Auschwitz lie" provisions, but rather for political opposition to other aspects of the measure's overall crime-fighting proposals.

The fact that lawmakers introduced a bill solely focusing on the "Auschwitz lie" on the same day they rejected the overall crime bill shows that it is important to them to enact tougher legislation against Holocaust denial, he said.

The Bundesrat has a majority of the opposition Social Democratic Party. It apparently vetoed the bill because Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative government attached too many unpopular initiatives to the legislation.

But the aspects of the legislation governing neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic crimes were broadly supported, Schmidt-Meinecke said. Many Social Democrats have argued that such legislation is needed because of recent controversial decisions handed down by various federal courts in Germany.

A federal appeals court ruled in March that simply saying that Jews were not gassed at Auschwitz or that it was technically not possible to gas people is not punishable under German law.

The court ruled that merely repeating such statements is not a crime, and that it must be shown that a person making such statements intended to insult or injure someone.

The judgment caused outrage in Germany and abroad. The court subsequently ruled such remarks punishable, but their legal status remained unclear.

## WOMAN NAMED HEAD OF RABBINICAL BODY

By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, June 22 (JTA) -- One year after the Conservative movement ordained its first female rabbi in Israel, the association of Conservative rabbis here has elected a woman, Gila Dror, as its chairperson.

Dror, a divorcee and mother of three, was born in Petach Tikvah and raised in an Orthodox home.

Speaking on Israel Radio, she termed her election "a revolution, a step forward. This is the first time, as far as I am aware, that a woman will be heading a rabbinical body anywhere."

There are 140 Conservative rabbis in Israel, she said, adding that she did not consider her election as a demonstration or a provocation. "I have worked in Israel for four years and worked with all my heart for the association," she said.