



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman is lobbying hard against Conoco's \$1 billion investment deal with Iran.** Bronfman, who sits on the board of DuPont, which owns Conoco, said DuPont has not approved the deal. He went to Capitol Hill to lobby members of Congress against the project, which many Jewish groups are opposing. [Page 3]

■ **Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman and nine others accused of plotting to blow up the United Nations and other New York City landmarks also planned to build 12 bombs targeting the Jewish community, the government's key informant in the trial testified.** Emad Salem's remarks followed earlier testimony during which he demonstrated a gesture that El Sayyid Nosair had made implying that Nosair had shot Rabbi Meir Kahane in November 1990. Nosair, one of the defendants in the current case, was acquitted of Kahane's murder, but was convicted on separate weapons possession charges.

■ **U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher met with Syrian President Hafez Assad, but there was no breakthrough reported in the long-stalled Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.** It remained unclear whether Christopher's visit would result in a resumption of talks in Washington between the Israeli and Syrian ambassadors and high-ranking military officials of the two countries. Assad suspended those talks in December. [Page 3]

■ **New legislation making Holocaust-denial a criminal offense went into effect in Belgium.** Under the new law, which was passed by the Belgian Parliament in February, violators may be jailed for up to one year and fined a maximum of \$30,000. Prior to the new law, Belgium was, along with Denmark, one of the few Western European countries where the publication of revisionist literature was not a crime.

■ **A Disney-owned investment company purchased nearly a quarter stake in one of Israel's largest companies, Koor Industries.** The deal is believed to be the largest foreign investment in an Israeli company. Koor employs some 20,000 people in 30 businesses. [Page 2]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES (Part 1 of 2)

Jewish groups take back seat in affirmative action debate

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, March 13 (JTA) — Several Jewish groups long associated with civil rights causes recently took part in planning a news conference designed to shore up support for affirmative action — a policy increasingly under attack.

But when it came time for the news conference itself, which took place March 1 and was led by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the Jewish groups were nowhere to be found.

Jewish representatives "didn't know what positions would be staked out" at the news conference, said the representative of one group involved in the planning stages.

The Jewish groups included the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the American Jewish Congress and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Their partial involvement in the news conference reflected the deep ambivalence within the Jewish community over one of the most volatile issues in black-Jewish relations.

Today, Jewish groups — even those that in the past have strongly favored affirmative action policies or outspokenly opposed them — are approaching the impending political firestorm gingerly.

"It's a little bit early yet to be guessing at how the Jewish community will react," said Marc Stern, co-director of the Commission on Law and Social Action at the American Jewish Congress.

"This is going to be a big issue, and we want to see what the Clinton administration does on it and how other political factors play out" before taking our own stand, said the head of one major Jewish group. This leader's refusal to speak for attribution in itself reflects the sensitivity of the issue within the Jewish community.

The issue has taken on increased prominence since the election of a Republican-controlled Congress last November. President Clinton, under political pressure from conservative Republicans, agreed recently to review affirmative action policies currently in place. A California ballot proposition against affirmative action may appear on the ballot in November 1996.

A watershed rift in black-Jewish relations

It has been almost 25 years since members of the Jewish community took the lead in opposing the notion of race-based remedies to discrimination in the workplace and on university campuses.

That opposition deeply disappointed black leaders and contributed to a watershed rift in black-Jewish relations from which the historic coalition has never fully recovered.

Affirmative action policies followed on the heels of the civil rights era, when Jews worked together with blacks to enact laws guaranteeing fair treatment for minorities. To many blacks, the hiring and admissions programs based on racial preferences seemed like the logical conclusion of the earlier work.

But to Jews, who make up less than 3 percent of the American population, it was clear that they would lose out if professional advancement were based on racial proportions rather than merit.

The first two major court cases challenging affirmative action policies related to white men trying to gain admission to graduate schools that had rejected them while accepting less-qualified minority students.

For Jews, university quotas were chillingly reminiscent of the quotas that had been used by Ivy League universities to keep them out as recently as the 1950s.

In 1973, Jewish groups spearheaded support of a Sephardi Jewish law student, Marco De Funis, whose application to the University of Washington Law School had been rejected. He claimed that less-qualified blacks were admitted instead. A year later, a non-Jewish Vietnam War veteran named Allan Bakke made similar charges when he was not admitted to the University of California Medical College at Davis.

The Jewish community was divided over the case. The American

Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League and AJCongress filed briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Bakke.

The National Council of Jewish Women and the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations filed briefs on behalf of the university.

Still, "Jewish groups were singled out for attack" by blacks who felt that the Jewish community had deserted their cause, according to a new book by Murray Friedman, "What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance."

The split over affirmative action coincided with a growing sentiment within some civil rights groups that favored black-only leadership and grew hostile to the white, usually Jewish activists who had been working with them.

"The position of the Jewish community was pretty uniform when this debate over affirmative action started," said Jack Greenberg, a professor at Columbia University Law School who formerly headed the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and was a central player in the civil rights movement.

The affirmative action conflict "really poisoned the black-Jewish relationship and exacerbated the problems" that already existed between the two communities, he said.

In the intervening 25 years, much has changed in the general political climate and in the relationship between the organized black and Jewish communities. Now, a perceived increase in black anti-Semitism and a growing tendency among both groups to turn inward have strained the once-close black-Jewish relationship.

Jewish groups draw line at quotas

For the past decade or so, most Jewish groups have cautiously favored overcoming discrimination with compensatory training and education programs — but have drawn the line at anything smacking of quotas.

The policy adopted in 1973, and slightly amended in 1975 and 1981 by the constituent agencies of NJCRAC, is an exercise in achingly careful wordiness.

NJCRAC is the Jewish community's umbrella group of national Jewish groups and local community relations councils.

's policy emphasizes merit-based opportunity, opposes quotas and advocates "compensatory education, training, retraining, apprenticeship, job counseling and placement, financial assistance and other forms of help for the deprived and disadvantaged."

"The sole criterion of eligibility for such special services must be individual need; the services must not be limited or offered preferentially on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or sex," the policy statement says.

Still, today, only ADL supports most white challenges of race-based remedies when the cases reach the courts. "We've long believed that there is no place in our society for quotas or goals and timetables," said Abraham Foxman, national director of ADL.

But no Jewish group has been out on the front lines of the current debate over affirmative action. Instead, Jewish groups have been moving cautiously and working mostly behind the scenes.

Because of the increased tensions between blacks and Jews in recent years, both Jews and blacks who are committed to working together are "more guarded" about their relationship, according to author Friedman.

Jewish groups are only now beginning to form their approaches to the current debate.

"We're beginning to coalesce around some of the issues" related to affirmative action, said Karen Senter, NJCRAC's co-director of domestic concerns.

The National Council of Jewish Women, which had

supported race-based graduate school admissions policies in the Bakke case, adopted a different policy in 1993, stating: "We resolve to work for affirmative action programs which ensure equal opportunity for all. We resolve to work for the elimination of quota systems in both the public and private sectors."

NCJW's executive director, Rosalind Paaswell, declined to explain the shift and would not hazard to predict what position her organization will take in the current debate. "We have to see what our members say," she said.

According to Stern of AJCongress, "We're in the process of setting up a task force to begin a full-fledged review of our policies to see how we ought to respond to the current debate."

"There are clearly new political winds blowing and we have to look at where the law is and the effectiveness of these programs," Stern said. "Maybe affirmative action was a pump primer and maybe it's time to move on to new programs."

The main vehicle for Jewish support of affirmative action is through the Washington-based coalition known as the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

Jewish participants in the conference's steering committee on affirmative action, which is still being formed, include NJCRAC, the Religious Action Center and AJCommittee.

This time around, the issue is emerging not as one of Jews vs. blacks, but one pitting conservatives vs. liberals and Congress vs. the Clinton administration.

Observers say that because Jews are not out in front this time opposing affirmative action, there is no need for the Jewish community to create waves in the already unsteady seas of black-Jewish relations.

"Ten or 15 years ago, affirmative action was the key issue dividing blacks and Jews, but these days there are so many more issues dividing us, like [Louis] Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. The affirmative action debate is an issue blacks and Jews acknowledge they will never agree on," said Jonathan Kaufman, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal covering race relations.

Kaufman wrote "The Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America," which was recently reissued by Simon and Schuster.

However, Kaufman warned, "If there is a rollback on affirmative action, it will be seen [by blacks] as another example of how whites and Jews betrayed them." □

Disney-owned investment group purchases Histadrut's main holding

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) — A Disney-owned investment company has purchased nearly a quarter stake in one of Israel's largest companies in what is believed to be the largest foreign investment in an Israeli company.

Shamrock Investments, an investment group controlled by communications mogul Roy Disney, acquired a 22.5 percent interest in Koor Industries.

The deal was valued at \$252 million, said Stanley Gold, Shamrock president. Shamrock, which is based in Burbank, Calif., purchased 3.9 million shares of Koor stock from Hevrat HaOvdim, a holding company of the Histadrut labor federation.

By selling all its shares in Koor, Histadrut divested itself of its main business holding. Histadrut represents about 60 percent of Israel's workers. Koor, one of Israel's biggest and most profitable conglomerates, employs about 20,000 people in 30 businesses, including communications, chemicals, electronics and construction materials. □

Bronfman leads lobby against Conoco deal with Iran

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, March 13 (JTA) — As the White House, State Department and Congress continue to turn up the heat on Conoco's \$1 billion investment in Iran, Edgar Bronfman appears poised to pull the rug out from under the deal.

Bronfman, a leading Jewish philanthropist whose family holds a controlling interest in the Seagram's company, sits on the DuPont board of directors. Seagram's owns 24.3 percent of DuPont, which in turn owns Conoco, a major Houston-based oil company.

Conoco announced that it had concluded its deal with Iran last week.

Bronfman, the president of the World Jewish Congress, went to Capitol Hill last week to lobby against the deal, Capitol Hill staffers said.

According to the staffers, Bronfman told senior House and Senate leaders that he is "unequivocally opposed" to the deal with a "rogue, terrorist state."

Bronfman reportedly was trying to persuade members of Congress to pass legislation banning any other American companies from stepping in with Iran if he were successful in persuading Conoco to pull out of the deal.

Several Jewish organizations have condemned the deal as well.

Bronfman met with Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.); Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.); Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee; and Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.), the House minority leader.

A World Jewish Congress spokesman said, "The World Jewish Congress and Edgar Bronfman forcefully oppose the deal between Iran and Conoco."

"It is our opinion that it will not go through," he said.

The deal has never been discussed or voted upon by the DuPont board, Bronfman reportedly told the members of Congress. Bronfman is traveling out of the country and was unavailable for comment.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) has introduced a bill that would block American companies from doing business with Iran, a bill that is being supported by Jewish groups. Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) introduced the same bill in the House of Representatives.

Currently, American firms can export oil from Iran as long as it does not enter the United States.

President Clinton is also considering blocking trade with Iran through an executive order. □

'Good' talks, no breakthrough as Christopher pursues mission

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher met in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Assad this week, but there was no reported breakthrough in the long-stalled Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

"I had five hours of good discussions with President Assad today," Christopher told reporters Monday before leaving Damascus for Jordan. He provided no further details about the talks.

Christopher was scheduled to brief Israeli leaders on Tuesday about his discussions with Assad. According to U.S. officials, Christopher was scheduled to return to the Syrian capital on Tuesday for further discussions.

The officials said Monday's talks covered all aspects of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which have been at an impasse over the extent and timing of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

It remained unclear whether Christopher's visit would result in a resumption of talks in Washington between the Israeli and Syrian ambassadors and high-ranking military officials of the two countries. Assad suspended those talks in December.

Christopher's visit to the Middle East — his first effort at shuttle diplomacy in the region this year — began with a visit to Egypt on March 7.

He arrived in Israel two days later to the news that Israel and the Palestinians had earlier in the day agreed to set a new target date of July 1 for completing talks on an Israeli redeployment in the West Bank.

Christopher held separate meetings over the weekend with Israeli leaders and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat in an effort to spur on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which has been put on hold in the wake of repeated terror attacks against Israelis.

On a visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday, Christopher secured long-promised financial help for the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority from the Persian Gulf states.

During a brief stopover in Jordan on Monday before flying on to Israel, Christopher pledged that Washington would keep its promise to write off Jordan's entire debt to the U.S. government.

President Clinton pledged to write off the Jordanian debt before Israel and Jordan signed their historic peace treaty in October. But the House Appropriations Committee recently proposed cutting the Jordanian debt relief from \$275 million to \$50 million.

"All those who have a stake in Middle East peace have to support Jordan," Christopher said at a news conference after meeting with Jordan's King Hussein. "America's commitment to Jordan will be fulfilled." □

Israel and Jordan pursue financing for dam project

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, March 13 (JTA) — Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan pursued efforts this week to get financing for dams to be built on the Yarmuk and Jordan rivers.

The two leaders met in Amman, Jordan, on Sunday to coordinate Jordanian and Israeli positions before requesting help from the European Union to finance the projects, which are aimed at increasing scant Jordanian water resources.

Under the terms of peace treaty signed by the two countries in October, Israel and Jordan agreed to construct the dams with international financing.

Israel also agreed in the treaty to provide 7.5 billion cubic feet of water to Jordan. The dams would enable Jordanians to trap large quantities of water during the rainy season. The dams would help divert an estimated 350 million cubic feet of water to Jordan.

Hassan and Peres were scheduled to visit Germany on Tuesday to secure backing for the water projects from Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Germany has agreed to provide a large portion of financing for the projects unless Syria or the Palestinians object.

One of the Jordan River's sources flows from the Golan Heights, which is claimed by Syria. The project could also have an impact on Palestinian agriculture in the West Bank, because many Palestinian farmers use the Jordan as their main water supply for irrigation. □

(JTA correspondent David Kantor in Bonn contributed to this report.)

Streisand probes 'memories' of Lubavitch, black Christian

By Simon Rocker

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, March 13 (JTA) — Having dressed up as a Chasid in "Yentl," Barbra Streisand is now contemplating making a film about a real-life rabbi, Shmuel Boteach, the leader of the Jewish students' society at Oxford University.

The singer-actress with a social conscience is apparently intrigued by the friendship between the young American Lubavitch rabbi and a black American Christian, Corey Booker. As a visiting Rhodes Scholar, Booker became co-president in 1993 of the Oxford-based L'Chaim society. The society, which draws many well-known guests, is open to all denominations.

The L'Chaim society was forced to part company with the official Lubavitch movement last year because Boteach was seen as too non-conformist. The group had planned to co-sponsor a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose stance on territorial compromise is opposed by the Lubavitch movement.

Streisand met with Boteach and Booker earlier this month at her Manhattan home to discuss the possibility of her production company filming their story.

The contact came through "a mutual friend who knew they were interested in doing a story on black-Jewish relations," Booker said.

Boteach described Streisand as "one of the nicest and most humble people I've met, and proud of her Jewish identity." He added that if the film is made, "I want to be played by Tom Cruise or Arnold Schwarzenegger." □

Orthodox rally at consulate against Israeli construction site

By Alexandra J. Wall

NEW YORK, March 13 (JTA) — Thousands of fervently Orthodox men gathered in front of the Israeli Consulate in midtown Manhattan last week to protest the building of a parking lot on an ancient cemetery site in the Israeli city of Jaffa.

Wearing traditional black hats covered with plastic to fend off the afternoon drizzle March 7, protesters carried signs decorated with skulls saying: "Israeli Government: Stop the Brutal Grave Vandalism" and "Let Our Sages Rest in 'Peace,' Not in 'Pieces.'"

According to the Athra Kadisha organization and the Central Rabbinical Congress, which both sponsored the rally, the site in question holds the remains of a Jewish cemetery more than 2,000 years old.

But a statement from the Israeli Consulate says that even though a Jewish burial ground in Jaffa does in fact exist, it is not at this particular site.

The Israeli Antiquities Authority, after completing a "rescue excavation" on the site in 1994, found traces of a 4,000-year-old city. But the authority determined that the burial site was Christian, and with the cooperation of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Saint Davidos I, officials removed all remains to rebury them.

But Rabbi Lazer Stern, a spokesman for Athra Kadisha, said a cave was discovered recently on the site containing "seven boxes" of Jewish bones. He added that Athra Kadisha archaeologists have determined that the site contained Jewish graves.

Athra Kadisha has asked the developer to compromise by building the parking lot above ground so as not to disturb the site.

But both the mayor of Tel Aviv, Roni Milo, and the developing company, Ilan-Gat, have refused on the

grounds that it would violate Jaffa's strict building code, which keeps all structures low enough as to not interfere with the view of the Mediterranean.

"How is it that in Israel, to save a view, we have to desecrate our forefathers' bones?" Stern said.

Fervently Orthodox in Israel have also protested the Jaffa construction site. Last month, Israeli police arrested some 140 fervently Orthodox Jews at the site.

Also last week, a massive demonstration took place in the Mea Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem. And Haredi protesters clashed with the Antiquities Authority over an excavation site in Jerusalem.

The authority it was suspected that radical haredi activists had severely damaged the mosaic floor of a Byzantine bathhouse uncovered in recent excavations in the Mamilla development project near the Jaffa Gate of the Old City.

Israel Radio reported that the vandals had painted black graffiti at the site, signing it with the name of an extremist haredi group called "Keshet." □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

Anti-Semitic acts in Australia hit all-time high, says report

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, March 13 (JTA) — Australian Jews suffered a record number of anti-Semitic incidents in 1994, according to a report recently released by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

A total of 227 incidents were reported in 1994, an increase of 9 percent over 1993, the study said.

Vandalism of synagogues, such as serious property damage, is a major cause for concern, the report said. The council also identified anti-Jewish posters and leaflets in public view as another type of incident on the rise.

Fewer reports were made in 1994 of violent incidents of vandalism and harassment than in the previous two years, the audit said.

But the most frequently reported type of incident was the receipt of threatening mail, often sent anonymously to private addresses.

The council concluded in the study: "Although most of the perpetrators have not been found, it appears to be more than a coincidence that a growing number of small, but vocal far-right wing groups have increased their public profiles in the past year."

Council President Isi Leibler said, "It is difficult to comprehend the mentality of individuals who will telephone synagogue offices and say, 'Hitler didn't kill enough of you bastards,' daub messages such as 'Gas Jews - White Power' in shopping centers, send letters claiming the Nazi genocide was a myth invented by malicious Jews to men and women who personally suffered through the Holocaust."

"Yet there are individuals in the Australian community who have done all of these and many other acts of violence, vandalism and harassment, in the past year," he said.

Recent studies in the United States and Canada found similar results. The Anti-Defamation League recorded 2,066 acts of anti-Semitism in the United States in 1994, more than in any of the 16 years that it has conducted its annual audit.

In Canada in 1994, a total of 290 anti-Semitic acts were reported, the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in 13 years of documentation and an increase of nearly 12 percent from reported anti-Semitic acts in 1993, according to the Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, spearheaded by the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada. □