



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ The United States initiated proceedings to revoke the citizenship of a Florida man accused of persecuting Jews during World War II. Adolph Milnius, 78, a retired physician, is suspected of being a member of the Lithuanian security police in 1941.

■ Neighbors of a Russian Jewish couple in the Philadelphia area whose menorah was destroyed by rocks through their window rallied behind the victims. In a development reminiscent of a similar incident in Billings, Mont., a few years ago, the non-Jewish neighbors displayed their own menorahs.

■ The mandate of the Norwegian temporary observer force in the West Bank town of Hebron was extended by one month. The unarmed force was created more than two years ago, after a Jewish settler killed 29 Islamic worshipers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

■ Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians convened in Jerusalem to establish a regional task force aimed at preventing the spread of AIDS. The conference, organized by the Jerusalem AIDS Project, focused on obstacles facing public health professionals in the Middle East, where religion and cultural traditions play a major role in both health and education.

■ The Israeli government approved additional budget cuts of about \$550 million that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said were needed to get the economy back on track. The \$64 billion budget is expected to be brought before the Knesset by the end of the month. [Page 4]

■ A ceremony marking the return to the Jewish community of a 93-year-old synagogue in Kazan, Tatarstan, drew Jewish dignitaries and local officials. About 1,000 Jews were at the ceremony in the sovereign republic inside Russia.

■ The Portuguese Parliament abrogated the expulsion order issued against the Portuguese Jewish community 500 years ago. The move came during a visit to the country by Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Pondering U.S. Jewry's future: How will the community look?

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — What will America's Jewish community look like two generations from now?

Will the group of people calling themselves Jews be smaller, more cohesive and intensively engaged in observance and learning than it is now? Or will it be broad and inclusive of a wide range of practices, policies and subpopulations, perhaps even some not considered Jewish by others?

Or will the Jewish community consist of some combination of both?

The American Jewish community is also at a turning point as the results of the seminal 1990 National Jewish Population Study begin to sink in. The study found a 52 percent rate of intermarriage and low levels of Jewish observance and affiliation.

Trepidation about the future was clear at a recent daylong symposium where 120 of the Jewish community's most influential opinion- and policy-makers argued the merits and flaws of two divergent approaches to the crises of intermarriage and disengagement from Jewish life.

At issue are the millions of dollars — no one knows exactly how many — that Jewish federations across the continent are now devoting to "Jewish continuity," and how that money will continue to be spent.

In the view of some, the right approach is to focus on "in-reach" to Jews on the cusp of engagement, to draw them in to stimulating, challenging synagogues and schools that have clear rules for membership, or expectations of behavior, and help them become more literate, passionate Jews.

Those with this view say it is of little use to use scant funds to try to save those who already have checked out almost completely from identifying as Jews. This camp also believes that the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable Jewish behavior — even from a pluralistic point of view — must be clearer if Jews are to remain a distinct people and not simply meld into Christian America.

'Increasingly not a people apart'

In the view of others, it is equally as important to focus on "out-reach." Recognizing that more than half of Jews marrying today have non-Jewish partners, this group emphasizes creating welcoming communities whose doors are wide open — with the hope that these Jews will walk through and bring with them their non-Jewish spouses and children, with the goal of helping them become engaged Jews.

This camp holds that it is important to offer opportunities for growth to the Jewishly engaged, but that the only way to build a lasting Jewish community is to adapt to the existing realities and make the Jewish community's boundaries more permeable so that people feel as comfortable coming in as they seem to feel going out.

The "Consultation on Strategies to Secure Jewish Continuity," convened Dec. 5 by the American Jewish Committee at its headquarters here, brought together for debate sociologists, historians, educators, organizational and outreach professionals, and rabbis and other leaders from each of Judaism's four major movements.

Participants used a policy statement, signed in August by Steven Bayme, director of the AJC's department of communal affairs, and 19 others, as their jumping-off point. "In a well-intentioned effort at inclusivity, some in the Jewish community seem all too willing to sacrifice distinctive Judaic values and teachings," they wrote in their "Statement on Jewish Continuity."

"American Jews, integrated into American society and full participants in its activities, are increasingly not a people apart. As boundaries blur, inclusivity runs the risk of degenerating into a vague universalism that is Jewishly incoherent; for example, non-Jews receiving aliyot," that is, being called upon to bless the Torah as it is read. Some Reform and Reconstructionist congregations allow non-Jewish spouses or relatives this honor.

The signatories urge the adoption of five values termed "fundamental" to the future of the Jewish community: Torah, meaning shared commitments to Jewish learning and obligations; Am Yisrael, a commitment to the notion of Jewish peoplehood; klal Yisrael, meaning a community of

Jews committed to a pluralism of religious expressions; covenant, meaning "strong, visible religious boundaries between Jews and non-Jews"; and outreach, to moderately affiliated Jews rather than to "those who have strayed furthest from Judaism" for fear of "siphoning off funds urgently needed to strengthen Jewish life at its core."

Among those who signed on to the statement were sociologists Steven Cohen and Samuel Heilman; Conservative Rabbis Nina Beth Cardin and William Lebeau, and historians Jack Wertheimer, Deborah Lipstadt, Paula Hyman and Ruth Wisse.

Some of those gathered at the AJCommittee criticized their approach as elitist and exclusionary.

Deborah Dash Moore, a professor of religion at Vassar College, castigated the "self-appointed gatekeepers with their penchant for drawing boundaries and setting up barriers" for proposing a "theological straitjacket" that she, as a Reconstructionist Jew, could not accept theologically or sociologically. "Why are you so obsessed with boundaries?" she said.

Her son, Mik Moore, who attended in his capacity as national director of the Jewish Student Press Service, also spoke of how meaningful it was for him that his father, a non-Jew, as well as his mother, was allowed to be with him on the bimah at his Bar Mitzvah.

Many speakers made it clear how painful and personal an issue intermarriage is.

Helene Berger, a lay leader who has worked for the Council of Jewish Federations, among other groups, spoke with great pathos about raising her daughter in a home where commitment to Jewish values was part of the air they breathed. Although her daughter as a child and young adult was deeply involved in Jewish activities, she fell in love with and married a non-Jewish man.

'Cultural transformation'

"For the Jewish community to say we have to spend our money elsewhere is turning their back on a person like my daughter. I am looking for the Jewish community, which I have served with joy all my life, to be there for my daughter," she said with tears in her eyes.

When Lynn Korda Kroll, a lay leader who chaired CJF's National Task Force on Jewish Continuity, which issued its report in 1995, asked how many in the room had intermarried family members at their Passover seder table, at least two-thirds of the people present — all of them deeply committed Jews — raised their hands.

Even some of those people, though, criticized an approach that, needing to find a lowest common denominator to make "marginal" Jews and the intermarried feel comfortable, makes it impossible for a rabbi to say from the pulpit that intermarriage is not a Jewish value, or to condemn the practice of Jews having Christmas trees for the sake of their non-Jewish spouse.

"There's potential for a cultural transformation," Bayme said in a later interview. "It's unfortunate that in our well-intentioned efforts to make people comfortable, we make it impossible to discourage mixed marriage."

"Either Jewish continuity rests upon distinctive Jewish teachings or it risks becoming so diluted as to be meaningless," he said.

Many participants suggested that there might need to be a communal policy approach toward outreach and intermarriage — particularly when it comes to resource allocation and communal activity — that is different from how people and synagogues handle the issues.

Arriving at consensus worked well when the organized Jewish community needed to hammer out strategy dealing with anti-Semitism or the rescue of Jews in crisis-ridden countries, but it became clear at the symposium that this approach does not work on this issue.

The conclusion seemed to be that there is no wide agreement on one approach to the "continuity crisis." What did become clear was that different parts of the Jewish community use various approaches and that, no matter what any group of intellectuals says, different strategies will continue to be employed by religious movements and groups that have different perspectives.

In reality, even a single federation or religious movement or synagogue generally uses different approaches to reach different audiences.

Several participants said the focus of the entire discussion was wrong: "We have spent all day in the heart of the periphery," said Leonard Fein, director of social action at the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations. "I don't think intermarriage is the principal reason for the depletion of our numbers," Fein said. "It's boredom."

David Arnow, a vice president of UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, agreed.

"The critical issue we should be asking ourselves," he said, "is what do we have to offer people that they will find valuable?" □

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Pro-Israel activists hail new national security adviser

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Pro-Israel activists are hailing President Clinton's newly named national security adviser Samuel "Sandy" Berger as a sound choice who will be an important asset as the administration works to push the Middle East peace process forward.

"He has been fully supportive of a set of values, principles and priorities that the pro-Israel community has a deep interest in," said Steve Grossman, chairman of the board of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Berger, a 51-year-old Jew who has served as deputy national security adviser the last four years, was part of the new foreign policy team named last week.

Although not much is known about his Jewish organizational affiliations, he is known to be a member of a synagogue in Washington where his children became B'nai Mitzvah. And in 1991, Berger gave a contribution to the left-wing Americans for Peace Now — a donation that Gail Pressberg, the group's Washington director, characterized as "small."

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, welcomed the appointment. He "understands Israel's security needs," Hoenlein said.

Pressberg said there is enthusiasm among Peace Now members about Clinton's entire new foreign policy team, but stressed that her organization does not take positions on specific appointments. She added that she did not think that any personal views Berger holds with respect to the Middle East would be relevant in his new post.

"His views about foreign policy issues have been complicated by the fact that he's been in the White House," Pressberg said. "He's looking out for American interests first and foremost."

For his part, Grossman said, "Sandy has been a key architect of policies" toward Israel as Israelis "were taking meaningful and dramatic risks for peace."

Tom Neumann, executive director of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a conservative pro-Israel think tank, said his organization would "wait and see" how Berger approaches the new position.

For now, Neumann said, "we have good feelings about him. We think he'll be fine."

Berger does not require Senate confirmation. □

Documents: Swiss facilitated transfer of Nazis to Argentina

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The search for looted Nazi gold and missing Jewish assets from the Holocaust continues to produce staggering findings at virtually every turn.

Newly released documents have confirmed long-held suspicions that the Nazis transferred their wealth to Argentina for safekeeping during World War II.

But what had not been known until now is that the Swiss may have helped transport Nazis and their plundered assets to Buenos Aires, as documents uncovered by the World Jewish Congress and the Senate Banking Committee suggest.

A 1946 U.S. diplomatic memo released last week by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who chairs the banking committee, said U.S. diplomats suspected that high-level Nazi officials, including Hermann Goering and Joseph Goebbels, were using Swiss diplomatic pouches to send their wealth to Argentina during the war.

The document cited accusations "that Nazi German capital is escaping in Swiss diplomatic pouches, probably without the knowledge of the Swiss federal government, because of the government's practice of entrusting diplomatic missions to its bankers and businessmen traveling to the Western Hemisphere."

D'Amato sent a pointed letter last week to Carlo Jagmetti, Switzerland's ambassador to the United States, demanding an explanation. "My great fear is that it was these bankers who were allowed to carry on such missions that were facilitating the transfer of Nazi loot to Argentina and beyond," D'Amato wrote.

"If this is in fact the case, it is a further indictment of the complicity of Swiss banks in Nazi crimes and must be investigated."

Swiss officials denied any prior knowledge of the reports contained in the memo and have dismissed it as hearsay.

Thomas Borer, Switzerland's main spokesman on the issue of Switzerland's wartime role, accused D'Amato of using unverified documents and presenting them as fact. But he said an independent research commission now being formed by the Swiss Parliament would look into the matter.

Swiss profited from Nazi ties

Meanwhile, additional documents have surfaced alleging that the Swiss government turned a substantial profit by providing Germans with phony documents needed to flee to Argentina.

The charges are contained in a secret 1948 U.S. military memo that D'Amato also released last week. The one-page document, written by a U.S. army major, quoted a confidential informer with connections in the Swiss and Dutch governments as saying, "The Swiss government was not only anxious to get rid of German nationals, legally or illegally within their borders, but further that they made a considerable profit in getting rid of them."

The informant said German nationals had paid Swiss officials as much as 200,000 Swiss francs for the temporary residence document necessary to board a flight out of Switzerland. The sum was worth about \$45,000 at the time.

Moreover, that document and others suggest that KLM Royal Dutch Airlines may have illegally flown suspected Nazis to safety in Argentina, while Swissair acted as a booking agent. Air France and Air Sweden were also identified as either transporting suspected Nazis or helping book them flights.

The focus on Argentina comes as other newly declassified documents show the path of missing Jewish wealth leading toward the Czech Republic.

Shortly after the end of World War II, the Allies turned over to what was then Czechoslovakia \$500 million in recovered assets belonging to Holocaust victims, ostensibly for the purpose of restitution. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split into Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The assets, according to a U.S. military document released by the WJC, included gold and silver melted down from teeth, wedding rings and other valuables.

None of that money ever found its way back to the Czech Jewish community, according to WJC Executive Director Elan Steinberg. He said he met with the leader of the Czech Jewish community, Thomas Kraus, who confirmed that no restitution was ever made.

Steinberg called the revelation "monstrous," saying that it "clearly would indicate that similar developments occurred with respect to the other Eastern and Central European governments."

The fate of missing Jewish assets and the role Switzerland and its banks played during and after the war was the subject of a congressional hearing scheduled this week by the House Banking and Financial Services Committee.

Those scheduled to testify at Wednesday's hearing included WJC President Edgar Bronfman, D'Amato, Borer, Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat, who is the Clinton administration's Special Envoy for Property Claims in Central and Eastern Europe, and former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, who is heading an independent investigation to determine the value of dormant Swiss bank accounts. □

Bosnian Jewish refugees find new homes in Croatia

By Ruth E. Gruber

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — Within a few weeks, the last Bosnian Jewish refugees in Croatia will be resettled in permanent housing, according to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

"The relatively speaking 'massive displacement' of Jews from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia is now a chapter of the past," said Yechiel Bar Chaim, the JDC country director for Croatia.

Hundreds of Bosnian Jews fled to Croatia during the war in Bosnia, either on their own or in convoys organized by the JDC. Hundreds more found refuge in Serbia. Many went on to settle in Israel, the United States and elsewhere.

Bar Chaim said three of the four Bosnian Jews still in temporary housing in a hotel at Makarska on the Croatian coast would be moved shortly to the Ladislav Svarc Jewish Old Age home in Zagreb.

It was hoped that permanent housing would be found soon for the one remaining refugee.

Most Bosnian Jewish refugees in Croatia had received Croatian citizenship and were receiving Croatian pensions, he said.

In Serbia, he said, about 70 Jewish families remained without citizenship or pensions and were getting subsidies from the JDC, British World Jewish Relief and other Jewish aid organizations. More than 100 refugees who fled Bosnia for Serbia remain in temporary quarters.

Bar Chaim said that since the Dayton peace accord, some Jewish refugees had returned to Sarajevo. "I don't think I've felt as much joy in these past four years as walking into the Jewish community center there and seeing some of the elderly refugees that we cared for sitting, talking and being with their friends." □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Appeals court ruling on AIPAC could affect future operations***By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The American Israel Public Affairs Committee may once again be battling for its political future.

A ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia has opened the question of whether AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, should be considered a political action committee.

The court's move could also have a potentially seismic impact on the future of all membership organizations in the political arena.

"This is a potential can of worms for any advocacy organization in the United States," said Morrie Amitay, a former executive director of AIPAC.

"This goes way beyond AIPAC," said Amitay, a Washington-based attorney who also runs the pro-Israel Washington PAC.

"But that's only if the FEC is irrational or unreasonable and decides somehow that AIPAC is not a membership organization," he said, referring to the Federal Election Commission, which must now revisit the case it first considered four years ago.

More immediately, the decision could deal a crippling blow to one of the Jewish community's most influential organizations.

If AIPAC — which, in spite of its name, is not currently classified as a political action committee — becomes defined as such, the FEC would sharply restrict the organization's ability to raise and spend money and would force the lobby to open its books for public disclosure.

Political action committees, commonly known as PACs, raise funds to distribute to political candidates.

In 1992, the FEC, in response to a complaint, ruled that while AIPAC spent money in an effort to influence congressional elections, that was not the group's "major purpose" and therefore was not required to register as a political action committee, according to Ian Stirton, the FEC's senior public affairs specialist.

On appeal, a lower district court upheld the FEC ruling, as did a three-judge panel at the federal appeals court.

Opponents of Israel behind court case

But the plaintiffs pursued the case, appealing to the full panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

The lawsuit was filed by James Akins, former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and was supported by former Rep. Paul Findley (R-Ill.) and former U.S. Information Agency official Richard Curtiss.

All are known for their staunch opposition to Israel.

The appeals court, in its ruling last week, said the "major purpose test" should not apply in this situation and sent the case back to the FEC.

According to Stirton, the FEC can appeal the decision to the Supreme Court within 90 days, find another reason to rule that AIPAC is not a political committee or declare AIPAC a political committee.

Any decision, though, is at least months away and no matter how the FEC rules, the case is likely to be tied up in the courts for years.

AIPAC officials expressed optimism that if the FEC reopens the case, it will determine that AIPAC is not a political action committee.

AIPAC's future hinges in part on whether the FEC

rules that it is a membership organization. Federal law grants wide latitude for membership groups to raise money and to communicate with their members on political matters and candidates' positions.

Different laws, however, apply to PACs. PACs are restricted in the amount of money that they raise from individuals and in the amount that spend on a particular candidate.

For AIPAC, the answer is clear.

"We're entitled to communicate anything we want to our members. We're a membership organization, pure and simple," said Philip Friedman, AIPAC's general counsel.

"If I'm wrong on this and we're not a membership organization, than the FEC decision would impact every organization, every union, every do-gooder that meets with a candidate and tells their members and their friends" what the candidate said and what their positions are.

Since the FEC first handled the complaint four years ago, AIPAC has made some structural changes that it says strengthen the lobby's claim that it is a membership organization.

The changes were voluntary and not in response to any FEC ruling, AIPAC officials said.

AIPAC officials vehemently deny that the lobby is involved in influencing elections.

In any event, their lawyers believe that they will prevail.

"This is about basic fundamental First Amendment rights. It's not the First Amendment as amended by the FEC," said Friedman.

Meanwhile, AIPAC officials stressed that it is business as usual and that the ruling would not affect day-to-day operations. □

Israeli Cabinet approves more cuts in 1997 budget*By Naomi Segal*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Israeli Cabinet has approved additional budget cuts of about \$550 million.

The government already had approved a total of \$1.6 billion in cuts from the \$64 billion 1997 budget. The Knesset must approve the budget by the end of the month.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the additional cuts were essential to reduce the deficit and get the economy back on track.

"If we don't cut, let there be no doubt that we will pay with a deterioration in our standing in the financial markets and in our credit rating," the prime minister was quoted as telling the Cabinet on Monday before the vote.

Many of the additional cuts will come in the areas of education, social welfare and housing.

Foreign Minister David Levy, Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav, Interior Minister Eli Suissa and Labor and Social Welfare Minister Elishah Yishai voted against the additional cuts in the 14-4 Cabinet vote.

A compromise was reached to lessen the cuts in education to only 0.6 percent, after Trade and Industry Minister Natan Sharansky offered to shoulder some of the burden.

"When it was clear to us that many ministers were asking to lessen the cuts in education, Minister Sharansky offered to give more from his ministry, so we could take less from education," Finance Minister Dan Meridor told reporters afterward.

Opposition parties sharply criticized the Cabinet decision. Labor party officials said they doubted the approved cuts would be implemented. The Knesset is set to debate next week no-confidence motions submitted by the opposition over the budget. □