



## NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook, the head of Hamas' political wing, arrived in Jordan after being deported from the United States, according to a Hamas official in Jordan. Detained by U.S. officials in July 1995, Marzook was deported to Jordan after Israel dropped its extradition request.

■ Israelis stood at attention as a siren wailed for two minutes to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day. Observances were dedicated to the 1.5 million children murdered by the Nazis. [Page 2]

■ U.S. Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat reiterated that a report on the Swiss role in World War II "will pull no punches." Eizenstat, whose report is scheduled to be released later this week, joined other dignitaries and Holocaust survivors at a New York event marking Holocaust Remembrance Day.

■ Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat expressed doubt that U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross was bringing any new ideas for reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

■ The boards of the Israel Policy Forum in New York and Project Nishma in Washington, D.C., have decided to merge the two organizations. Both are advocates of a strong U.S. role in the peace process and are merging in "response to the urgent need to salvage the peace process as evidenced by the current crisis in the Middle East," an IPF statement said.

■ An Israeli businessman was indicted in a Tel Aviv court on charges of selling Iran equipment for manufacturing chemical weapons. Nahum Manbar, faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment if he is convicted.

■ A Swiss night watchman who lost his job after blowing the whistle on a Swiss bank's shredding of documents pertaining to Holocaust-era bank accounts said in an interview that he traveled to the United States to escape death threats and find a job. "I don't really feel safe anymore" in Switzerland, said Christoph Meili.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

## Historic budget agreement falls short for immigrants

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The highly touted balanced budget agreement between President Clinton and congressional Republicans would provide only a partial reprieve for some legal immigrants if the blueprint becomes law.

Despite claims of victory by the White House, the historic agreement falls far short of President Clinton's promise to restore the cuts in aid to legal immigrants that were enacted in last year's welfare reform legislation.

Even if Congress approves all aspects of the budget agreement, the Jewish social service system will face a multimillion dollar crisis when poor, elderly immigrants who have not become U.S. citizens — including tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union — begin to lose federal support this August.

"President Clinton did not go as far as he could have," said Diana Aviv, director of the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations. "He could have held out for better."

Some federations across the country have begun to craft contingency plans and others have launched special fund-raising campaigns to provide assistance to those elderly refugees who will be axed from the welfare rolls.

But the federated system cannot step in to make up for what the federal government will cut off, activists say.

Under the deal announced last Friday by Clinton and Republican leaders:

- Only disabled immigrants who were in the United States before the welfare measure became law last August will be eligible to continue receiving federal support from Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid.
- Low-income immigrants who are not disabled will be barred from Medicaid and SSI, as called for under welfare reform legislation. SSI provides each recipient with about \$460 monthly in cash assistance.
- No children of legal immigrants will be eligible for Medicaid coverage.
- No food stamps will be provided to immigrants. Some states may step in to provide their own food stamp and Medicaid programs.

But all the news from the deal was not bad, according to those in the Jewish community who are closely following this issue.

### Agreement requires lengthy legislative process

In a major breakthrough for refugees, the agreement — which still requires a lengthy legislative process — would extend by two years the access to benefits that refugees currently enjoy. Jews from the former Soviet Union and other refugees are afforded special protections because they are fleeing from what the government calls a well-founded fear of persecution.

The federal government treats refugees the same as citizens for their first five years when it comes to federal welfare programs. Last week's agreement would extend that access for two more years, bringing to seven the number of years a refugee can access the benefits.

The challenge for Jewish social service agencies arises after this period, if the refugee does not become a citizen. The refugee is then classified with all other legal immigrants and barred from welfare. Many of the tens of thousands of Jewish refugees who come each year, primarily from the former Soviet Union, are elderly and disabled and cannot pass the citizenship test.

By banning most federal assistance to immigrants, welfare reform saved \$24 billion over five years. The agreement hammered out between Clinton and congressional leaders would restore \$10 billion to this saving.

Because the additional spending only applies to immigrants in the country before Clinton signed the law last August, eventually the pool of those eligible will disappear. In his weekly radio address over the weekend, Clinton included a passing reference to how the agreement treats immigrants. The budget agreement "keeps my pledge to continue the job of welfare reform," he said, by "restoring some of the unwise and excessive cuts included in last year's welfare bill."

But the fact that only some of the cuts would be remedied under the

agreement has sparked the ire of many in the organized Jewish community.

"I do not think that the president has fulfilled his promises, which is not what we had in mind when we signed on to welfare reform," said Pamela Seubert, director of government programs at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

While most Jewish groups had opposed the welfare reform legislation, they had retreated from their fierce opposition, believing that Clinton would uphold his promise to restore the cuts affecting legal immigrants.

In addition, any changes to welfare under the budget agreement would not go into effect until Oct. 1, a full two months after immigrants are scheduled to begin losing assistance. Congress is scheduled to vote on the budget agreement in the coming weeks.

But that's not the end of the line. If approved, as expected, the House still has to craft 13 annual appropriations bills, which would include the welfare changes.

Jewish activists have pledged to lobby Congress to include all of the changes agreed to by Clinton and GOP leaders.

For his part, Yossi Abramowitz, president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, has promised to work for more changes, calling the agreement "a window of opportunity."

"You can't say to an old disabled person, here's your SSI check, do you want to use it for rent or food?" Abramowitz said, referring to the cut-off in food stamps, which began to be felt last month.

The Union of Councils recently staged a Capitol Hill rally to draw attention to the plight of immigrants.

"If they do not restore food stamps for disabled immigrants, we will bus people in to sit in front of the congressional cafeterias," Abramowitz said.

But convincing Congress to spend more money on immigrants is an uphill battle. Congressional committee chairmen are given a fixed amount of money in the budget resolution, which details the path to a balanced budget by the year 2002.

Therefore, any additional spending on food stamps or SSI would have to be offset by a cut in other spending. Meanwhile, Jewish activists also will be watching other aspects of the budget agreement as they fall into place.

Whereas welfare fixes emerged as one of the few areas where negotiators struck a specific agreement, on other issues, such as low-income elderly housing, "a lot of the details still have to be worked out," said Mark Meridy, senior housing specialist at B'nai B'rith.

B'nai B'rith runs more than 20 low-income housing facilities around the country.

But preliminary evidence indicates that the budget deal contains enough money to renew low-income elderly housing projects as their contracts expire, Meridy said.

"What we do not know is at what rate," he said.

On foreign aid, negotiators did not hammer out an agreement on specific sums of money, but advocates remain optimistic that Congress will approve a modest increase in foreign spending this year.

Levels of aid to Israel, however, are expected to remain constant at \$3 billion annually. □

### Children victims of Holocaust recalled in Israeli ceremonies

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A two-minute siren brought Israel to a standstill Monday, as the country remembered the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

In Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies held

around the country, the names of the victims were read aloud as part of the traditional idea that "every person has a name."

Most other countries held the observance a day earlier than Israel, where the commemoration was postponed so as not to conflict with the end of Shabbat.

Commemorative events for the day known in Hebrew as Yom Hashoah were held in New York and in other cities across the United States.

In Berlin, local Jews, politicians and Holocaust survivors gathered Sunday to read aloud the names of the nearly 56,000 Berlin Jews murdered by the Nazis. It took more than 24 hours to read all the names.

In Poland, some 2,500 young Jews held an annual March of the Living at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Kaddish was read at a memorial site located near the former death camp's crematorium.

In the Knesset in Jerusalem, government members and legislators read out the names of relatives who had perished in the Holocaust.

The president, prime minister, Knesset speaker and Israel's chief rabbi also took part in the presentation of a new Torah scroll in the Knesset synagogue. The scroll was dedicated to the 1.5 million children who were murdered in the death camps. The remembrance of these children was the theme of Israel's observances this year.

When Israel began its observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day with a somber state ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, both President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu touched on the theme of children in their addresses.

"The cry of the infant is still calling out, even if we cannot hear it," Weizman said.

"There were some who died even before they were weaned of their mothers' milk, before they said their first words, before they stood."

He warned that now, more than a half century after the end of World War II, it was still impossible to say that certain regimes, armed with weapons of mass destruction and unhindered by morality, would not bring the world to ruin again.

#### 'We pass on the legacy to our children'

Weizman stressed that it was important not only to remember those who had died, but to identify and empathize with those who had survived.

"We pass on the legacy to our children, not to instill sorrow in them, nor to detract from the love and happiness in their lives, but so that they can build a life of security, justice, faith and hope in Israel."

Netanyahu called for a strong Israel to achieve peace and hope for future generations.

"It is impossible not to wonder about the potential artists, scientists and scholars that were among the murdered children; about the leaders, the generals and the physicians stolen from us in their death," Netanyahu said.

"Today we promise them, survivors and victims alike, that we shall dedicate our lives to ensure that the danger of annihilation never hovers over our children's heads, that they shall never know terror or fear, nor die an untimely death."

Six torches, representing the six million Jews who died, were lit Sunday night by individuals who had survived the Holocaust as children.

Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, speaking Monday in Jerusalem, said almost all European nations still had Jewish property looted by the Nazis. He called on all of Europe — not just Switzerland, which has gotten most of the attention in recent months — to examine its wartime behavior. □

**Swiss party launches campaign against efforts to aid survivors**

By Fredy Rom

ZURICH (JTA) — Switzerland's Jewish community is reacting with alarm to a new campaign launched by the Popular Party aimed at undermining public support for two Swiss funds created to help needy Holocaust survivors.

"Blackmail is disgusting and ugly," reads one poster that was put up at key intersections here by the right-wing party, which is part of the governing coalition.

"During the last war, as a small country we accepted more Jews than any other country. We do not want to be praised because we saved Jews, but we reject blackmail connected with guilt," the poster reads.

The campaign, which also includes advertisements in Swiss newspapers, has sparked fear among many in Switzerland's 20,000-strong Jewish community.

"Orthodox Jews are afraid to go out alone in Zurich's streets. Often we are stopped and threatened by people," said Miryam, a member of Zurich's Orthodox community.

The Swiss Jewish community is increasingly feeling the effects of the heated controversy that was touched off here after the government established the funds earlier this year in an effort to confront its wartime past.

A recent poll conducted among the Jewish community indicated that 11 percent of the interviewees had been involved in or witnessed at least one anti-Semitic incident since January.

Local Jewish leaders also voiced concern about the campaign, which was financed by Christoph Blocher, a right-wing parliamentarian who is president of the Zurich branch of the Popular Party and has been an outspoken critic of the Swiss funds.

**'A very dangerous campaign'**

"The Jewish community of the country is worrying that the campaign could release anti-Semitic feelings," said Thomas Lyssy, vice president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Switzerland, the communal umbrella group.

"It is a very dangerous campaign," Lyssy said, adding that the federation was hesitant about issuing a statement of protest "because we do not want to give these kind of people a public platform."

Adolf Ogy, a member of the Popular Party who serves as the country's defense minister, refused to comment publicly on the campaign launched by Blocher.

But Ueli Maurer, the national president of the party, expressed his support.

Former Swiss President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz has been held responsible for at least some of the anti-Semitism.

In an interview in late December, Delamuraz dismissed Jewish calls for compensation to Holocaust victims as "extortion and blackmail."

Delamuraz later apologized in the wake of an international outcry.

Months of mounting international pressure regarding the whereabouts of Holocaust-era secret Swiss bank accounts prompted the government in late February to establish the Holocaust Memorial Fund.

Created with contributions from Switzerland's largest banks and industrial firms, the fund is valued at about \$190 million.

The fund was created to make payments to needy Holocaust survivors as soon as possible while the questions regarding the missing assets are worked out — a process that could take years.

In March, Swiss President Arnold Koller proposed

the creation of a second fund, the so-called "Swiss Foundation for Solidarity" to help the "victims of poverty and catastrophes," including victims of the Holocaust.

To create the foundation, the Swiss National Bank would sell off some \$5 billion of its gold reserves.

Interest and other investment income from the proceeds of that sale would generate some \$200 million annually to support humanitarian causes.

The Swiss Parliament is expected to vote next year on Koller's proposal, after which it would be subject to at least one national referendum because the proposal requires a change in the Swiss Constitution.

Recent polls indicate that a majority of Swiss electorate would vote against the proposal.

The campaign being waged by the Popular Party takes on both the Holocaust Memorial Fund and the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity.

"An international organization wants money," one poster reads, in a thinly veiled reference to the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

The WJRO has spearheaded international efforts to determine the whereabouts of assets deposited by Holocaust victims in Swiss banks during the war years.

"A former Swiss president believes that this is blackmail," the poster continues.

"After some opposition, the government gave up and wants to sell gold.

"The Parliament said: Yes, yes, yes. And the people have to pay? Never, never, never." □

**Tel Aviv University study finds worldwide drop in anti-Semitism**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Violent anti-Semitic incidents dropped around the world last year, but anti-Semitic propaganda continues to proliferate, especially on the Internet, a report released this week concluded.

Major anti-Semitic attacks — including shootings, firebombs and arson — declined from 41 in 1995 to 32 last year, according to the annual "Anti-Semitism Worldwide" report, prepared by Dina Porat of Tel Aviv University. The study found 72 such incidents in 1994.

The report, published Sunday on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel, was co-sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress.

Along with the drop in major attacks, the report also found a decline last year in acts of anti-Semitic vandalism.

The only country where the report found an increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 1996 was Australia, which posted a 12 percent rise over the previous year.

But the report noted a growth in the dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda over the Internet, saying there were 39 World Wide Web sites that were overtly anti-Semitic.

The authors of the report said the drop in violent incidents could be attributed to better worldwide enforcement of anti-terror laws.

In the United States, the report said, there was a 17 percent decline in anti-Semitic incidents since 1994.

The report also found a decline in Europe, but warned of the rising popularity of extreme right-wing parties there, including the National Front in France and Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria.

In Switzerland, which has come under international pressure to determine the whereabouts of assets deposited by Holocaust victims in Swiss banks during the war, the report found an increase last year in anti-Semitic propaganda. □

## Chicago rabbinical groups issue decree to dialogue on concerns

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — At a time of increasing religious factiousness, a ray of hope has blown in from the Windy City.

The city's two rabbinical organizations — the Orthodox Chicago Rabbinical Council and the multi-denominational Chicago Board of Rabbis — have jointly issued a statement calling on their respective communities to work together toward understanding and cordial relations.

"We invite our respective communities to join in working toward authentic dialogue," said the statement, which was issued last month. "We do not anticipate resolving the many points of disagreement that separate us, nor is this our goal.

"Rather, we seek to achieve better understanding and more cordial relations among ourselves as rabbis and congregants, rooted in the conviction that the Jewish future is better served when we voice our disagreements to one another, and not to reporters."

It is the first time that the two groups have overcome the clear ideological wall that increasingly impedes Orthodox and non-Orthodox groups from officially working together.

In Chicago, relations have been historically "cool but cordial" between Orthodox and non-Orthodox rabbis, said Rabbi Ira Youdovin, executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis.

His group has 200 members, 20 of whom also belong to the Orthodox Chicago Rabbinical Council, which has 100 members.

### 'Not a single dissenting voice'

Rabbi Menachem Rosenfeld, executive director of the Orthodox group, was concerned about the flack his organization might get for cooperating on a public statement with the pluralistic rabbinical body.

"We haven't really sent it out, and have kept it low key," he said.

"We were also very apprehensive at the beginning about the possible fallout within" the Chicago Rabbinical Organization.

But "there was not a single dissenting voice. It was a very welcomed step."

Rosenfeld was eager to downplay it, though. "The bottom line is that I don't see this as being a major breakthrough. We all know that the Jewish community is one, and we tried to reaffirm that this is what we have to strive for.

"Sometimes we, as rabbis, miss the boat, and we're just trying to refocus."

Orthodox religious groups, in general, no longer work with non-Orthodox groups. Many Orthodox religious leaders also put pressure on the few of their colleagues who are still willing to cooperate with non-Orthodox rabbis to stop.

They say the liberal movements have veered so far from the historically accepted standards of Jewish practice — on the ordination of women, and the Reform movement's acceptance of patrilineal descent and homosexuality — that it has become impossible to sit down at the same table.

It has been at least a decade since the two Chicago bodies were able to meet directly, Youdovin said.

While the two groups work on local federation and Jewish community relations council projects, "there's been resistance on the part of the Chicago Rabbinical Council to join in joint statements with us on anything," he said.

Orthodox and non-Orthodox rabbis informally study Jewish texts together from time to time, Youdovin said, "though it's even harder now than it was five years ago" to get them sitting down at the same table.

Worry grew in Chicago "when the invective being hurled on the national and international levels" between Orthodox and non-Orthodox religious leaders "began to show up in local press with local quotes," he said.

National media recently reported on a fervently Orthodox rabbinical group that declared the Reform and Conservative movements — which represent more than 80 percent of American Jews — are "not Judaism."

Also in the headlines have been vituperative public exchanges between Jews about the growing breach between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, and American Jews and Israel, over the liberal movements' lack of official standing in the Jewish state.

Youdovin and Rosenfeld grew concerned about the lack of any public responses addressing the continuing unity of the Jewish people.

"The silence was leaving a vacuum, and if there's a vacuum then it's that much easier for the bad news to fill the vacuum," Youdovin said.

Earlier this month, three Reform and three Orthodox rabbis found themselves together in a room after an Anti-Defamation League luncheon ended, and they began discussing some Jewish issues of concern.

"The tone was wonderful," said one rabbi present. "Sometimes the best discussions, like in the Talmud, don't come to one conclusion.

"There will be continuing discussions like this on an informal basis. Jewish unity is extremely important these days and we have to preach it, and also have to practice it."

Rosenfeld said such joint endeavors may be more likely in the future.

"Jews who have not spoken to other Jews are thinking we have to do this more often," he said.

"Jews are realizing how important we are to one another." □

## Jewish cemetery vandalized in Russian city of Smolensk

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Vandals destroyed 52 headstones last week at a Jewish cemetery in Smolensk, a city of 280,000 in western Russia.

The headstones were turned over and broken. Dozens of metal name-plates were ripped off the stones.

Leaders of the 5,000-strong Jewish community of Smolensk called on local authorities to condemn the act of vandalism, which occurred on April 27, the day of Russian Orthodox Easter.

Viktor Vaksman, the head of the Smolensk Jewish community, said in a telephone interview that the incident was a clear case of anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitic incidents have become "a sort of Easter tradition" in Smolensk, Vaksman said.

Last year, the Jewish community's office was burglarized on Easter Day, and its door was daubed with a swastika and anti-Semitic slogans.

Two years ago, a few dozen headstones were damaged at the same Jewish cemetery.

"Then, the city hall paid to repair the damaged headstones. This year, they also promised to do that," Vaksman said.

However, local authorities do not want to attract public attention to the incident, he said.

Smolensk television was asked by the police not to show the damaged tombstones in its newscast. □