



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Leaders of Switzerland's Jewish community are being placed under police protection after they received death threats. Anti-Semitic incidents in Switzerland have increased in recent months as the Swiss have come under international pressure to pay restitution to Holocaust survivors.**

■ **Hundreds of Israeli police were deployed across the country as part of a heightened alert for more terrorist attacks. Meanwhile, U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross is expected to visit the Middle East later this week in a bid to revive the Israeli-Palestinian talks. [Page 3]**

■ **Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat said he had no plans at this time to accept the resignations offered by his ministers. Sixteen members of Arafat's 18-member Cabinet gave him a collective letter of resignation, prompted by recent allegations of widespread corruption and financial mismanagement in the authority.**

■ **An organization that attempted to encourage American investment in the Palestinian economy shut down its operations. Builders for Peace, which was born in the wake of the 1993 Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn, has yet to complete any of its projects, including a planned hotel and business center in the Gaza Strip.**

■ **Documents have been found implicating the Vatican in a World War II gold scandal involving the Nazis and Swiss banks. Their discovery in the U.S. National Archives comes two weeks after President Clinton ordered a review into a postwar U.S. intelligence report that the Vatican stored \$130 million in money taken from Jews and Serbs by the Nazi puppet state of Croatia.**

■ **A federal judge ruled that a security firm affiliated with the Nation of Islam could proceed with its lawsuit against members of the U.S. Congress and the New York Legislature. X-Men Security charged that it lost a contract in a public housing project as a result of discrimination. [Page 2]**

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Deaf Holocaust survivors telling how they eluded extermination

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Peter Farago should have died long ago.

The Nazis, with their twisted theories on eugenics and euthanasia, had earmarked all handicapped Jews for a speedy death.

And Farago, deaf since birth, fit the bill.

In December 1944, he arrived at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in the Netherlands in December 1944 as a quiet, chubby 10-year-old from Hungary. He was immediately separated from his mother.

Alone and hungry, Farago approached other children. When he caught their gaze, he simultaneously motioned to his mouth and rubbed his stomach.

That's when Pavel saw him.

The hearing son of deaf Poles, Pavel, 13, recognized Farago was communicating in sign language.

Pavel intervened and signed to him the advice that would save his life: Don't let the guards see you.

"I don't even know if he knew the reason, just that I shouldn't draw attention to myself," said Farago, now 63 and living in Budapest.

"It was in 1946 that I learned about the gas chambers, and that all of those handicapped had been taken there first."

Stories like Farago's are now being told, or signed, in one of the first efforts to document a history of the Holocaust from the perspective of deaf inmates.

The project is the brainchild of two American professors from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., the only American university for the deaf.

The two are currently touring Central Europe to videotape the testimony of deaf Jews who survived the concentration camps, labor camps and ghettos.

The new video project reflects the trend toward identifying each of the groups that suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

Indeed, the perspective of deaf people has its unique aspects: While they did not hear the terrified screams and crying, they registered the vibrations of exploding bombs and gunshots.

And more than other camp prisoners, they required the discreet helping hand of a comrade.

An inestimable number of disabled never made it that far.

In 1933, as Hitler consolidated his power, Germany targeted for sterilization those with hereditary physical or mental defects who were considered obstacles to creating a master race. Those targeted ranged from the physically retarded to the deaf or blind.

Policy turns to extermination

In subsequent years, the policy of sterilization turned to one of extermination.

"The deaf are a group that was discriminated against before, after and, of course, during the Holocaust," said Gallaudet Professor John Schuchman, a historian of the deaf and author of a book on deaf Hollywood actors during the era of silent films.

"This is a story of the Holocaust, but it's also a story of the deaf community.

"Various groups are entitled to their history."

Schuchman and his colleague, Donna Ryan, have joined forces with Israel Sela, director of Hungary's American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee office, to conduct the project.

Sela, who received a doctorate from Gallaudet, conducted the first census of the deaf community in Israel.

"The deaf survived the war as broken pieces," said Sela, whose deaf parents provided temporary shelter to deaf Holocaust survivors soon after the war and helped them find homes, jobs and counseling in Israel.

"Society was never aware of their special needs."

One of the first things Sela did upon his arrival in the capital city of Hungary three years ago was to place a plaque on the site of the former

Jewish school for the deaf. It was one of seven such Jewish schools in Central Europe.

Farago was a student at the school in March 1944, when Nazi-backed Hungarian fascists began cleansing the countryside of Jews.

In May of that year, he and his mother, Anna, 37, were herded into a ghetto in their hometown, Oroshaza, with the community's 900 other Jews.

By June they were aboard a train headed for Auschwitz. But they were "lucky." The tracks through what is now Slovakia had been bombed, forcing them to be re-routed to Austria.

They remained in a detention center in Vienna for six months, before being deported to Bergen-Belsen in December.

There, Pavel took Farago under his wing. The younger boy followed Pavel's lead, and they signed to each other only when it was safe.

When on line for roll call each morning, Pavel stood next to Farago, tapping or squeezing his hand to let him know when to respond to his name being called.

Grateful for the friendship and guidance, Farago gave Pavel his leftover rations of bread or potato.

Once the camp was liberated in March 1945, they parted ways. In the 52 years since, Farago has never attempted to contact Pavel.

He does, however, recall him fondly as the tall, thin boy with "beautiful blond hair."

"I don't want to meet him because all the memories would come up," said Farago, who was reunited with his mother in Hungary as both returned home after the war.

"But I think about him all the time and keep him in my heart."

Klara Erdosi also owes her life to a fellow inmate, her sister Julianna.

Then 21, Erdosi and her sister, 10 years her senior, had been deported together to Ravensbruck, a concentration camp in Germany for women. Their two brothers, both in their 20s, had already died during the war.

The situation in the camp was bleak, and Julianna, who had perfect hearing, picked up gossip here and there that those strong enough to work would be sent to the nearby Penig labor camp.

The rest, too sick or weak to work, would likely be liquidated.

She survived to perform a grisly task

So Julianna told Klara, who was limping from a mild case of frostbite to her right leg, to walk with normal strides despite the pain.

Both were selected for Penig.

There, Klara was assigned a grisly task. While others chopped down trees, she dug graves for those inmates who died of disease.

She cried often, fainted on occasion in the bitter cold, and was beaten several times.

In her three months of duty, she managed to dig 57 graves. But she and her sister lived to see the camp liberated by Soviet soldiers in June 1945.

"Julianna was always by my side," said Klara, 74, whose sister died in 1989 at the age of 76.

"I would have died without her. If I had stayed in Ravensbruck, they would have sent me to the gas."

With many compelling stories to record — more and more deaf survivors kept coming forward — Schuchman and Ryan spent longer than expected in Budapest, the first leg of their trip.

Other stops will include Prague, Berlin, Krakow, Poland, and, perhaps, Warsaw.

The material they gather from their interviews will be deposited in the archives at Gallaudet.

The two plan to return for more interviews next summer, after which they will host an international conference on the deaf and the Holocaust.

"Your stories will become part of their stories," Ryan reassured a recent gathering of deaf survivors in Budapest. "Your stories will be told." □

Judge rules Nation of Islam firm can sue federal, state legislators

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A New York federal judge is allowing a lawsuit brought against two legislators by a Nation of Islam-affiliated security firm to proceed.

Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and New York State Assemblyman Jules Polonetsky (D-Brooklyn), who in 1994 began urging federal and state governments to terminate contracts with businesses affiliated with the Nation of Islam, are set to stand trial on charges that they "conspired" to deprive X-Men Security of its constitutional rights.

The firm, which patrolled a Brooklyn housing project financed by both federal and state funding, lost its contract in 1996 as a result of the lawmakers' efforts.

The two could be held liable for the value of the lost contract and other damages.

X-Men was one of several such companies whose contracts were terminated or allowed to lapse after members of Congress, New York state officials and Jewish groups called on federal and state governments to examine Nation of Islam-affiliated businesses that receive taxpayer funding through contracts.

They charged that the Nation of Islam is not an equal opportunity employer and stands in violation of federal anti-discrimination laws.

They also referred to the racist and anti-Semitic views espoused by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, saying that taxpayers' funds should not be used to subsidize bigotry. Specifically, they charged that security companies such as X-Men were using their positions to proselytize on behalf of the Nation of Islam.

In his opinion last month, U.S. District Judge Leo Glasser said such acts "allegedly exerted pressure" on the owners of the public housing project to cancel the contract with X-Men.

He said that is "sufficient to raise an inference that X-Men were retaliated against based on their association with the Nation of Islam and Farrakhan" and that its First Amendment rights were violated.

The two politicians, the judge said, may have infringed on the X-Men's equal protection rights by having the company treated "selectively" on the basis of religion.

The judge, meanwhile, dismissed two charges brought against the lawmakers related to due process.

In issuing the preliminary ruling, the judge only concluded that there was sufficient basis for a trial based on the plaintiff's allegations. He did not rule on the merits of the charges.

King expressed confidence he will be exonerated.

"There's absolutely no evidence of any type of religious discrimination," King said in an interview. "This was strictly a government decision, and in this particular case, the X-Men contract, I had no involvement."

Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department, called the ruling "troublesome."

"It remains problematic that this suit is going ahead because the message for government officials is 'just lay off — it's too expensive and burdensome to bother with Farrakhan.'" □

**Israel on alert for more terror;
U.S. mediator to visit this week**

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli security forces have gone on high alert in the wake of warnings that more terrorist attacks may follow last week's double suicide bombings in the Mahane Yehuda market here.

The warnings of a follow-up to the July 30 attack prompted Israeli security forces to deploy in large numbers around the country.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced, meanwhile, that the peace process would not resume without a Palestinian commitment to clamp down on terror.

Israel and the Palestinians appeared to be readying to return to negotiations when the suicide bombers killed 13 people and wounded at least 170 others. After the attack, Israel suspended the planned resumption this week of joint committees that were to discuss implementing aspects of the 1995 Interim Agreement.

In the aftermath of the bombing, it remained unclear whether recently announced American mediation efforts could bring the two sides back to the table any time soon.

Israeli officials acknowledged over the weekend that it was possible the suicide bombers could have come from abroad, rather than from the self-rule areas.

The Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, said the working assumption was that Hamas or another Islamic militant group was behind the attack and that Israeli security officials were detaining anyone who could possibly shed light on the perpetrators' identities. Last week, both Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack.

Throughout the weekend, Israeli security officials were stationed in shopping malls, bus stations and other public areas in the country's large cities. Spot security checks caused traffic tie-ups on the nation's roads.

With Israelis growing increasingly jittery about another attack, police said they received hundreds of reports about suspicious-looking people. Explosive experts were called in to neutralize bombs thought to be in unattended packages, which turned out to be harmless.

The closure Israel imposed on the territories after the attack remained in effect this week, and Israeli security forces continued to round up suspected activists in Islamic militant organizations.

Ross due in the region

Israeli and Palestinian officials met Saturday night to discuss the investigation into the bombing.

Palestinian security officials said the contacts had only to do with the investigation, and that full security cooperation between the two sides had not resumed.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai told the Cabinet that the Palestinian Authority had yet to take steps to implement the wide-scale crackdown on the terrorist infrastructure in the territories that Israel had demanded.

U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross was due to arrive in the region later this week to discuss the new American proposals to renew Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which have been frozen since March.

Ross' trip was postponed last week after the terrorist attack took place in Jerusalem. His return was scheduled for after the seven-day period of mourning had elapsed.

President Clinton said last Friday that the success of Ross' visit would determine when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright would come to the region.

Observers initially expected that Ross would press

Israel to suspend settlement construction as part of a package to renew the negotiations.

But in the wake of the terror attack, American officials believe that Israel will be unlikely to offer the Palestinians any conciliatory gestures, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

American officials were reported to have revised the proposals Ross would present to the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, putting more emphasis on security concerns.

Just the same, Ross was still expected to raise the settlement issue, Ha'aretz reported.

The last two funerals of the 13 victims from last week's bombing were held Sunday.

Mark Rabinovitz, 80, and Grigory Pesahovic, 15, both of Jerusalem, were laid to rest in the city's Har Hamenuhot Cemetery. □

**Australian church shifts stance,
alters views on the Jewish state**

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — One of Australia's largest churches has adopted a comprehensive statement that indicates a shift in its views on Israel.

The Uniting Church agreed at its recent meeting in Perth to use the word "homeland" in reference to the Jewish state.

It also acknowledged that "the Jewish people have a particular historical, cultural, emotional and spiritual bond with the land of Israel, which is a central element of the Jewish faith, and which is inextricably bound to the history of the Jewish people."

This part of the statement was particularly welcomed by the Australian Jewish community.

Relations between the church and the Jewish community reached a crisis point in 1991 after the church published a document, Mission Probe, which was extremely hostile to Israel and included what were described as caricatures and misrepresentations of Judaism.

The statement also put forward a series of initiatives designed to improve interfaith dialogue and improve education within the church about Judaism.

It notes that despite advances in scholarship and theology, "many Christians are regularly exposed to the interpretations of Scripture which denigrate the Jewish people and Judaism."

The church identified key elements for its members to recognize when participating in interfaith discussions. These include:

- "Christians and Jews share a common heritage in the unique testimony of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures) to the One God, Creator and Redeemer; and,
- "an anti-Judaism which developed in Christianity created fertile ground for the spread of antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust (the Shoah)."

The church also voted to distribute videos explaining the link between Christian teaching and anti-Semitism and to encourage all Church officials, teachers and ministers to "take into account the theological implications of antisemitism and the Holocaust (the Shoah) in their reading and interpretation of scripture."

The president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Diane Shteinman, who attended the session, said, "the statement issued by the Uniting Church is testimony to the genuine efforts by that church to understand the historic relationship between Christianity and Judaism."

The Uniting Church, with 1.3 million followers, is Australia's third largest religious denomination.

The Catholic and Lutheran churches recently adopted similar documents. □

Planned gas deal in Iran tests U.S. resolve in fighting terrorism*By Matthew Dorf*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A planned multibillion dollar investment in Iran's gas industry has emerged as the latest test of the Clinton administration's resolve to fight international terrorism.

The French oil giant Total has entered the final stages of a plan to develop a vast gas project that would revitalize Iran's fuel industry well into the 21st century.

Under last year's Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, President Clinton is required to review the project and consider imposing sanctions against Total that could include sharp restrictions on trade with the United States.

The Total investment comes as the Clinton administration faces congressional criticism for continued support for relaxed anti-terrorism regulations on Syria. Congressional critics have also attacked the administration for failing to fully implement last year's anti-terrorism law.

The Iran-Libya Sanctions Act requires the president to impose sanctions against foreign companies that invest more than \$40 million in the fuel industries of those countries.

Because gas is pumped into aging oil fields to extend their lives, the Total deal has tremendous implications for Iran's future.

Without the development of Iran's South Pars gas field, experts say, Tehran's access to capital from its oil holdings will continue to dwindle.

At a House International Relations Committee hearing last week, State Department officials said they are monitoring the Total deal.

"We have made clear to Total, as well as to the French government at very high levels, that we will take appropriate action if we find that sanctionable activity has occurred," said Alan Larsen, U.S. assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs.

'Chilling effect' on investments in Iran

Officials said that although no sanctions have yet been leveled, they plan to continue monitoring companies that do business with Iran.

The sanctions law has had a "chilling effect" on investments in Iran, Larsen told the committee.

He said Iran has sought investments for 11 projects, but had no takers.

While Congress has hailed the State Department for its threat of sanctions on companies doing business with Iran, criticism is mounting toward the Clinton administration's policy toward Syria.

Both the House and Senate voted earlier this month to take away the State Department's authority to exempt Syria from U.S. laws barring trade with countries deemed state supporters of terrorism. The Clinton administration has vowed to fight the measure.

While Syria remains on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, the Clinton administration has waived the ban on U.S. investment in Syria as an incentive for Damascus to reopen peace talks with Israel.

"To treat Syria as we treat, say, Iran, we think there has to be a distinction made," said Nicholas Burns, State Department spokesman.

"However difficult the Middle East peace talks have been, Syria has been at the table for a number of years," he said.

Although Syria is still banned from direct U.S. aid, congressional sources estimated that Damascus benefits from nearly \$200 million in U.S. business each year.

As Congress girds for battle with the administration on Syrian sanctions, behind the scenes, lawmakers are

continuing to push the State Department to implement a provision of last year's anti-terrorism law that would restrict fund-raising for terrorist groups — including many supported by Syria.

The State Department has yet to draw up a list of overseas terrorist groups. Without these classifications, the FBI cannot enforce the law's ban on fund raising for such groups.

"The Clinton administration fought hard to include a provision increasing its authority to prohibit persons within the United States from providing material support or resources to foreign terrorist organizations," 42 members of Congress wrote in a July 17 letter to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"We are concerned that the administration has not fully utilized the tools granted to it" in the law, the letter said.

State Department officials refused to comment on why they have not published the list. One official said plans are in the works to publish it later this summer. □

Belarussian television airs documentary alleging blood libel*By Lev Krichevsky*

MINSK, Belarus (JTA) — A new era might be dawning in Eastern Europe, but you would not know it if you lived in Belarus.

A documentary has been rebroadcast on Belarussian state television that includes the story of an alleged Jewish ritual murder of an infant more than three centuries ago.

The film was shown this week, when the Belarussian Orthodox Church celebrated the Day of Belarussian Saints. The majority of the former Soviet republic's population of 10 million belongs to the Orthodox Church.

The infant, St. Gavril of Bialystok, is revered in Belarus as the patron saint of sick children. He was found dead in 1690 in an area that is now part of Poland.

He was declared a victim of a ritual murder — an example of the familiar blood libel that for centuries was used as a pretext to carry out pogroms in Eastern and Central Europe against the local Jewish population.

The documentary repeated the accusation against Jews, adding that they were the "members of a secret fanatical sect" that centuries before had demanded that Jesus be put to death.

The widely advertised documentary was first broadcast three years ago by the Belarus state-run television station during the same Orthodox celebration.

Jewish groups in Belarus, who generally attempt to keep a low profile, did not protest that broadcast.

One Jewish activist indicated that he was planning to protest the latest broadcast to the country's prosecutor general. □

Zhirinovsky cheats at card finals

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky was disqualified at a recent championship involving the popular Russian card game Fool.

After boasting before the Moscow tournament that "politics and cards require skilled bluffing," the controversial leader of the Liberal Democratic Party found that the first game he played was annulled.

The reason: he was cheating.

Zhirinovsky was subsequently allowed to play another game, which he lost.

The winners, including chess champion Anatoly Karpov in third place, received prizes bearing the slogan, "Russia Should Become Smarter." □