



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel rejects U.S. plan

The Israeli Cabinet rejected as "unacceptable" and "damaging to the security interests" of the Jewish state a reported American proposal for a 13 percent Israeli redeployment in the West Bank as part of a package to move the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called President Clinton twice over the weekend in an attempt to persuade him not to go public with the U.S. proposal, according to Israeli media reports. The developments came as U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross was scheduled to visit the region later this week.

### Netanyahu denies Syrian deal

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied reports that Israel agreed to resume negotiations where they left off with Syria in 1996 if Damascus backed an Israeli proposal to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon.

Netanyahu was quoted as telling the Cabinet that Syria could raise any issue it wanted in negotiations with Israel, but that the Jewish state was not ready to trade portions of the Golan Heights in exchange for Syria's support for the Lebanon pullout. Meanwhile, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited Damascus to discuss the resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations and the proposal for Israel to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon. [Page 2]

### Report: Sweden bankrolled Nazis

Sweden gave the Nazis bank credits to enable Germany to purchase war materials from the neutral Scandinavian nation during World War II, according to a Swedish newspaper.

The claim was based on the wartime diary entries of the governor of Sweden's central bank.

### Jewish, Vatican officials to meet

Jewish leaders are slated to hold four days of meetings with Vatican officials that will likely focus on a document released last week by the Vatican on the Church's role during the Holocaust.

Most Jewish officials criticized the document for not going far enough in acknowledging the church's inaction during the war. Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II told reporters he thought that the wartime pope, Pius XII, was a "great" pontiff.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Turkey's Jews remain wary of Islamists' political strength

By Gil Sedan

ISTANBUL (JTA) — Nine months have passed since a group of Turkish legislators took action that brought down the first Islamist-led coalition in modern Turkish history.

The leader of the deserters was Cefi Kamhi, the only Jewish member of the Turkish Parliament.

"I was Ciller's Trojan horse," Kamhi said in an interview, referring to the head of the True Path Party, who was foreign minister in the Islamist-led coalition of Necmettin Erbakan.

Despite concerns that Erbakan would steer Turkey away from its traditional relationship with the West, his government continued to strengthen military ties with Israel. Indeed, Kamhi was instrumental in putting the finishing touches on Parliament's approval of a military accord with Israel.

But Kamhi quit the coalition because he believed that the Islamists had acquired too much power — a view held by Turkey's military as well.

The army, acting by its mandate in the constitution to be the guardian of the secular character of the country according to the legacy of the founding father of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, forced Erbakan to step down.

"The army acts, and then it goes back to its bases," said Kamhi, who is the son of a prominent Jewish businessman in Turkey.

For now, the emergence of the current secular coalition, led by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party, has eased the worries among Turkey's 28,000 Jews — a tiny minority in a Muslim country of more than 62 million people.

Kamhi stressed that it was now time to keep the Islamists away from political power — a task that is not so easy.

While Erbakan has been banned from political activity for five years — and his Welfare Party has been outlawed — the movement he headed remains strong.

All but five of the 158 of the Welfare Party's legislators are still in parliament — now members of a newly formed party called Fazilet, or wisdom.

"Of course we are concerned," said Kamhi. "One must continuously work on preserving the secular nature of Turkey."

When a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations visited Turkey earlier this month, they heard — from Jewish leaders as well as from political figures such as Yilmaz — the pride Turks take in the 500-year tradition of Muslim-Jewish coexistence in Turkey.

Indeed, they have good reason to be proud. Turkey served as a safe haven for Jews ever since the deportation of Jews from Spain in 1492.

But the worries are there.

A huge plaque at Neve Shalom Synagogue, one of 17 synagogues in Istanbul, commemorates the names of the 22 victims murdered during an Arab terrorist attack during Shabbat prayers on Sept. 6, 1986.

The plaque is a constant reminder that elements hostile to Jews exist in this traditionally friendly country.

As a result, the Jewish community has enhanced security.

Istanbul's only Jewish day school and other Jewish institutions are well guarded. Members of the Conference of Presidents' delegation had to pass through two steel

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Weizman plans amnesty

Israeli President Ezer Weizman is planning to grant up to 800 amnesties to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish state.

Weizman said all prisoners would be able to request amnesty and that Israeli officials would work on a case-by-case basis.

### Israeli Arab touted for high court

A Nazareth District Court judge is the leading candidate to become the first Israeli Arab to sit on Israel's Supreme Court, according to media reports.

Abdul Rahman Zoabi was part of the Israeli commission that investigated the 1994 Hebron massacre.

Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein, who sits on a legislative committee that appoints judges, said the appointment of an Israeli Arab to the high court would be an appropriate way to mark Israel's 50th anniversary.

### 'Analyzer' may face charges

Israeli prosecutors are reportedly leaning toward bringing charges against an 18-year-old computer hacker who allegedly broke into the Pentagon's network and other sensitive U.S. and Israeli computer sites. Ehud Tenenbaum, who calls himself "The Analyzer," is being held under house arrest along with two other Israeli teen-agers.

### Lerner agrees to plea bargain

A Russian immigrant to Israel with alleged ties to organized crime reached a plea bargain on fraud and bribery charges against him. Gregory Lerner agreed to plead guilty to some of the charges, which are linked to his alleged attempts to establish a Russian-Israeli bank that authorities feared would be used to launder money.

Under the terms of the deal, Lerner would serve a jail term of six years and pay a fine of \$5 million.



## Daily News Bulletin

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doors and a metal detector before they could enter. Parents of children attending the Jewish school are devoted to their Jewish identity and willing to spend \$3,000 in annual tuition, an exceptionally high expense in Turkey. The country's Jewish community subsidizes 40 percent of the school's annual budget.

But some of these children may not remain in Turkey.

Etel Baruch, 14, said she plans to go to the United States when she finishes school. Her friend Edna Diler, on the other hand, said she would eventually go to Israel.

"I love Israel because everyone is Jewish there," she said.

Some 5 percent of Turkey's Jews attend synagogue daily, with better attendance on Shabbat.

Two or three times a year, the community sends a delegation of officials able to perform Jewish rituals to the small community in neighboring Syria.

The political situation, combined with the dwindling numbers of involved Jews, has taken a toll.

"Six years ago, when we visited the community as it celebrated its 500th anniversary here, the atmosphere was more upbeat," said Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

With its small numbers, Turkey's Jews appear not to be involved in the religious pluralism debate raging in Israel and the United States.

"You have come to an organized community, which has no divisions. We have Jews who keep the mitzvot more, those who keep them less and those who keep them so-so. But we are all united," David Asseo, the chief rabbi of Turkey, told the Conference of Presidents' delegation.

But this unity might not mean much if there is an Islamic victory in the next elections, slated for 1999 — a victory that many political pundits are predicting.

"We are very much concerned by the growing popular support of the Islamic Party," said Daniel Navaro, deputy vice president of the Jewish community in Istanbul. "We had a pretty bad experience last year.

"But," he added after a short pause, "we hope for the better." □

## Israel denies Golan Heights part of plan to leave Lebanon

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has denied reports that the Jewish state agreed to return part of the Golan Heights to Syria if Damascus backed an Israeli proposal to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon.

Netanyahu was quoted as telling his Cabinet that Syria could raise any issue it wanted in negotiations with Israel, but that the Jewish state was not ready to resume negotiations where they left off with Syria.

Israeli-Syrian negotiations were suspended two years ago by then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres after Syrian President Hafez Assad refused to denounce a series of Hamas terror attacks in Israel.

Israeli officials have recently voiced their support of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 — which was issued 20 years ago and called for an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon — on the condition that the Lebanese government steps in and maintains peace in the region.

Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon — it has 30,000 troops stationed there — has rejected the offer, saying that Israeli implementation of the resolution should be unconditional. Political analysts have said it is unlikely Israel could reach an agreement with Lebanon in the face of Syrian opposition.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was slated to visit the United States later this week to discuss the Israeli proposal with both American and U.N. officials.

Before leaving for Washington, Mordechai was expected to meet here Tuesday with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The U.N. chief traveled to the Middle East this week to discuss the resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations and Israel's proposal to leave southern Lebanon. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Russians sentenced for spying

Two former Russian military intelligence officers were sentenced on charges of spying for Israel. The two were found guilty of selling 200 classified aerial photographs of the Middle East taken by Russian satellites to an Israeli diplomat stationed in Moscow.

The sentences were considered relatively mild by legal observers: three years for one of the men, a two-year suspended sentence for the other.

### Dutch to probe looted art

Art museums in the Netherlands established a commission to investigate all art acquisitions made during and after World War II. The move, intended to provide an accounting of any artworks looted by the Nazis, comes on the heels of a pledge last month by art museums in North America to research the ownership history of their holdings.

### Berlin mayor questions memorial

The mayor of Berlin questioned whether Germany should go ahead with plans to build a national Holocaust memorial.

Adding his voice to a national debate that has gone on for a decade, Eberhard Diepgen told an interviewer that it might not be "possible to deal with this horror artistically." Jewish leaders criticized his comments, saying they could send the message that Germany was unwilling to confront its Nazi past.

### Zhirinovsky faces charges

Russian prosecutors launched criminal proceedings against ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Head of the second largest faction in the lower house of Parliament, Zhirinovsky faces "hooliganism" charges for spitting and throwing water recently at fellow legislators during a debate.

### Radio station airs 'Protocols'

A show was broadcast on state radio in the former Soviet republic of Belarus that quoted extensively from a notorious anti-Semitic tract. According to the broadcast, the breakup of the Soviet Union and the economic difficulties now confronting Belarus were predicted in "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

### Germany moves against CD

German officials ordered a Berlin publishing house to destroy all copies of a compact disc it issued that contains unauthorized excerpts from "Mein Kampf."

The CD's creators said the recorded excerpts from Hitler's autobiography were intended to satirize the hysterical nature of the text. But government officials said the CD does not contain enough explanatory material to prevent its misuse by right-wing extremists.

## Guide to Russian archives will aid Jewish researchers

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A revolution for students of Russian Jewish life.

That's what one scholar is calling Jewish Documentary Sources in Moscow Archives: A Guide, recently published by a partnership between American and Russian institutions.

"For Jewish scholarship, the archives in the former Soviet Union are a second Cairo Genizah," David Fishman, chairman of the department of Jewish history at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, says, referring to the documents found 100 years ago in Egypt that transformed scholars' understanding of medieval Jewish history and culture.

"The archives of the former Soviet Union will do the same for modern Jewish history and culture," he says.

For seven years, Fishman and a team of scholars worked to catalog the vast archives of Russian Jewish life as part of Project Judaica — a joint academic venture of JTS, the New York-based YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow.

Project Judaica, which is headed by Fishman, was originally designed to teach archival skills and Jewish subjects to Russian archivists and design the archival guides. It now operates a five-year Jewish studies program in Russia that includes study in the West.

The book contains descriptions of thousands of archival files on Jewish history and culture, ranging from the Middle Ages to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 — including state organizations, political parties, public institutions, newspapers, political and cultural figures. The guide is published in Russian with an English-language index.

During the Soviet regime, the state placed strong restrictions on access to Jewish archival materials.

"For many years, we weren't allowed even to touch the Jewish topic," says Nina Volkova, head of the Russian State Archives on Literature and Art. "Once, censors had demanded that we drop the mention of documents of the [Moscow] State Jewish Theater from our guide."

Since restrictions on Russian archives were loosened after the fall of communism, scholars have been faced with some new dilemmas: knowing what material is available and where it is located.

Now scholars can know that there are 22 collections containing material on the Yiddish author Sholem Aleichem in Moscow and that these can be found in five different archival repositories — and that there are 13 different archives that have material on the ritual-murder trial of Mendel Beilis, a Russian Jew who in 1913 was accused of killing a Christian child.

The guide is an "extremely valuable tool for those interested in Russian and Eastern European Jewish history," says Rashid Kaplanov, the academic chairman of the Moscow Center for the University Teaching of Jewish Civilization.

Surprisingly, the Jewish documents found in Moscow archives — the richest in the former Soviet Union — go far beyond topics in Russian Jewish life.

There is also material on the history of the Jews of Germany, Austria, France and even the United States.

Some of these include the records of European Jewish organizations that were stolen by the Nazis during World War II and then seized by the Soviet Army.

There are also prewar documents on the American Jewish Committee, the New York Yiddish daily newspapers the Forward and the Freiheit, the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's Paris branch.

The guide is the first in a series of similar guides on the archives in the former Soviet Union.

Future volumes are scheduled to focus on St. Petersburg, other cities and regions within Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. □

## U.S. rabbi appeals to China to officially recognize Judaism

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — When he met in Beijing with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Rabbi Arthur Schneier delivered both a gift and a pointed appeal.

The gift: a Jewish encyclopedia written in Chinese and published in Shanghai. The appeal: that China recognize Judaism as an official religion.

Schneier carried that message to Jiang and other top Chinese officials last month as he and two other clerics toured China on a fact-finding mission about religious freedom.

China recognizes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism as official religions, but says it has no reason to recognize Judaism because it has no Jews.

But Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in New York, an organization that promotes religious freedom and dialogue, said he told the Chinese leader that with Hong Kong and its population of some 2,500 Jews now part of China, the issue has become more important, particularly as more Jews decide to move to the Chinese mainland.

In a recent telephone interview about his trip, Schneier said Jiang's response to his appeal was "We will give it careful consideration."

The three-week trip, aimed at opening a dialogue on religion with China, grew out of a summit meeting last October between Jiang and President Clinton in Washington.

Clinton is scheduled to visit China in June.

Schneier and the two other religious leaders appointed to make the trip by Clinton — the Rev. Don Argue, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, and Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Newark — said religious freedom in China has improved over the last 20 years, but still lags behind international standards.

"We were encouraged to find that many of the government leaders and citizens we met, people who are daily struggling to help China modernize, realize that tolerance of religious freedom is an important characteristic of all advanced, industrial nations," the religious leaders said in a report.

But they cited lingering problems, including the persecution of religious leaders whose congregations are not registered with the government.

While some human rights groups criticized the mission for not producing any concrete results, the religious leaders said they had succeeded in raising the profile of religion in China while laying the groundwork for future dialogue. As a sign of their success, they said China had promised to sign a U.N. human rights declaration guaranteeing freedom of religion.

In another move, which came in response to the delegation's requests, the mayor of Shanghai announced that a synagogue used by Jewish refugees during World War II and now occupied by the state education commission would be vacated, restored and declared a historic landmark.

Chinese officials also said that another synagogue would be vacated and restored for use as a museum in remembrance of the more than 20,000 Jews who took refuge in Shanghai during the Holocaust. While in Shanghai and Beijing, Schneier, who is Orthodox, officiated at two Shabbat services for the Jewish

expatriate communities there. The religious leaders' travels took them to seven cities, where they visited 28 religious communities and sites, including Hong Kong's Jewish community.

"This mission was a minefield, and we did our best," Schneier said. "We hope that it will evolve into a continuous interaction between the religious communities of our two countries." □

## Ukrainian Jewish mayor warns of anti-Semitism on election eve

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The Jewish mayor of a Ukrainian city is claiming that his political rivals are playing the Jewish card.

In a letter to Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, Dmitri Dvorkis, the mayor of the central Ukrainian city of Vinnitsa, urged the president to intervene to stop anti-Semitism that is being used against him and other Jewish candidates in races for next week's scheduled elections.

"The ethnic terror should be stopped to give the citizens of Jewish origin who consider Ukraine their motherland the opportunity to work for its benefit and not to force them to emigrate," he wrote. Recently, leaflets were distributed in Vinnitsa calling on voters not to allow "Judeo-Masons" to come to power.

According to Dvorkis, the leaflets were distributed by the People's Democratic Party of Ukraine. The country's prime minister, Pavlo Lazarenko, heads the party's slate in the upcoming elections to Ukraine's 450-seat Parliament.

Dvorkis was elected the mayor of Vinnitsa, a city of 300,000, in 1992. He is one of several Jews holding mayoral posts in the country. Parliamentary, municipal and mayoral elections are slated to be held in Ukraine on March 29. □

## Israel denies Mossad agents bungled operation in London

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's secretive spy agency can't seem to stay out of the news.

Israeli defense officials rejected as "nonsense" a recent British newspaper report that Mossad agents were involved in another attempted bugging operation of an Islamic militant, this time in London.

The Sunday Times of London reported that the incident occurred before Mossad agents were caught while attempting to wiretap an apartment last month in Switzerland. The newspaper said the agents in London fled to Israel after failing to carry out their mission.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Cabinet approved last week the appointment of Ephraim Halevy to serve as the new head of Mossad. Halevy, Israel's ambassador to the European Union and a former deputy head of the foreign intelligence service, was named to the post earlier this month by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Halevy replaces Danny Yatom, who resigned last month following a series of failed Mossad operations, including September's bungled assassination attempt on Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in Jordan and the failed alleged bugging operation in Switzerland. □