



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Iranian threat cited

Iran could strike U.S. cities with missiles in about five years if Tehran made a decision to obtain the necessary technology, a bipartisan congressional panel warned in a report on ballistic missile threats to the United States.

Countering the panel's assessment, U.S. intelligence agencies stood by their estimates that Iran could not deploy intercontinental missiles for at least 10 years.

However, both the panel and the CIA said that Iran and Iraq could develop shorter-range missiles capable of hitting Israel within a few years.

### Panel votes for cuts

The U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee responsible for writing the annual foreign aid bill voted to cut \$100 million apiece from next year's annual U.S. aid package to Israel and Egypt. The bill now goes to the full House Appropriations Committee.

### Businessman sentenced to prison

An Israeli businessman was sentenced to 16 years in prison for selling chemical weapons agents to Iran.

The judge in the case said that Nahum Manbar had sacrificed Israel's security "on the altar of unfettered greed." [Page 3]

### Switzerland to be no-show

The Swiss government announced it would not attend U.S. congressional hearings on reopening the Washington Agreement of 1946, under which Switzerland returned to the Allies a portion of the gold it received from Nazi Germany.

Ambassador Thomas Borer said he had written to Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who is holding the hearings next week, that the Swiss government has already testified on several occasions and that it has taken several steps to redress its wartime past.

### Russian Jewish site targeted

Vandals targeted the central Jewish cemetery in Moscow on Wednesday, Moscow's chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt, reported to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The vandals overturned some 30 headstones. The incident is the latest in a series of recent attacks against Jewish institutions in Moscow.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Klezmer aficionados gather at festival in St. Petersburg

By Lev Krichevsky

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (JTA) — Yefim Cherniy is one of the few Jews who grew up with klezmer music in the former Soviet Union.

"Even when this music could not be played in official concerts in the Soviet times, it still was in my parents' home," said Cherniy, a 39-year-old trained vocalist and guitarist who first learned about klezmer music from relatives who were cantors or performers in Jewish theater.

Cherniy, who has devoted his career to Yiddish music, is now a leading performer on the Jewish scene in Kishinev, the capital of Moldova, a former Soviet republic where much of the klezmer repertoire originated.

Few people in the former Soviet Union play this music, he said recently as he ran his fingers over his guitar strings. "To me, it's always very important to meet those who have made this music part of their lives."

He got a rare chance here at KlezFest '98, which brought together some 30 vocalists and music teachers from across the former Soviet Union — including such unlikely places for klezmer revival as Siberia and the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan.

In addition to master classes in Yiddish folk songs and klezmer music, participants attended lectures on Jewish cultural history in Eastern Europe and workshops on Yiddish folklore, dance and language.

The event was organized by the Center for Jewish Music of the Jewish Community Center of St. Petersburg and was supported by a grant from the New York-based Jewish Community Development Fund in Russia and Ukraine.

"We thought that this project would just be a way of connecting the two generations — the older listeners and the younger musicians who could see that by putting klezmer music in their repertoire they could draw more people," said Martin Horwitz of the development fund.

A three-hour concert attended by some 400 St. Petersburg Jews crowned the weeklong seminar earlier this month.

"I wished they played more and more," said Irina Kozlova, a listener in her 50s. "I never thought this music could be done so professionally."

The seminar, now in its second year, was first conceived as the Russian edition of KlezKamp, an annual event held in New York's Catskills mountains at the end of December. But unlike the New York festival, which draws music lovers and Yiddishists as well as professional musicians, the Russian version was mostly for professionals.

Like many other aspects of Judaism, klezmer has stepped into the limelight in recent years in the former Soviet Union. Still, few people take a serious interest in the music; it is rarely played outside weddings and family parties.

"The klezmer tradition had almost died here," said Leonid Sontz, leader of Simcha, or Joy, the only professional klezmer band in the former Soviet Union.

"There have been three generations away from this tradition. Our goal is to bring these tunes, songs back to life," said Sontz, whose band, based in Kazan, a city in the Volga region, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

Most of the students at the seminar were Jewish musicians in their 20s and 30s who were attracted to klezmer as a new musical genre.

"In America, younger people come to klezmer through an interest in anthropology,

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Premier, minister deny reports

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, issued a joint communique denying reports that the two were at odds over upcoming negotiations with the Palestinians. The statement said Mordechai was to negotiate "according to the policy of the prime minister and the Inner Cabinet." It contradicted Netanyahu's previous comments that Mordechai should only discuss the amendment of the Palestinian Covenant and the extent of a further Israeli redeployment.

### Assad arrives in Paris

Syrian President Hafez Assad arrived in Paris for talks aimed at getting greater French and European involvement in the Middle East peace process. The visit prompted protests by French Jews, and commentators branded the Syrian leader a dictator.

Before his arrival, Assad said in an interview that Israeli intransigence in the peace process could lead to war. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu countered by saying that Syria should know that peace could not be achieved through threats.

### Newspaper article attacked

A group of U.S. Holocaust scholars signed a newspaper ad condemning the publication of a Holocaust-denial article in the Palestinian Authority's official newspaper.

The article, appearing in the July 2 issue of *Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda*, called the persecution of the Jewish people a "deceitful myth" that Jews have "exploited to get sympathy."

### Bedouin, troops clash

Bedouin tribesmen clashed with Israeli soldiers who confiscated their goat herd, which was grazing in an army test-firing zone.

More than 30 Bedouin were reportedly injured and six arrested.



## Daily News Bulletin

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their own roots, country music or jazz," said Horwitz. "Here they are coming through classical music."

Indeed, most of the KlezFest participants were classically trained musicians and singers, but they came with more than a professional interest.

"What really moved me was the depth, the understanding people here have naturally of this music, even without studying it, simply having come from the earth where it was born," said Zalmen Mlotek, a New York pianist and conductor who lectured at KlezFest. "This music seems to be very much in their blood."

Some students spoke about ways to combine the music with Jewish life in their home communities. "This music is so lofty and it's such an important part of our history, mentality and spirit that it should be kept and developed," said Ada Ermi, 36, who has been gathering and performing Jewish folk songs in Latvia for nearly 10 years.

Clarinetist Alexander Rodin said he is considering opening a klezmer club in Samara, Russia, where his band, called Aliyah, would play and give lectures on Yiddish music and culture.

"This music is not only about nostalgia," said Cherniy.

"It's a crossing of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Those who cannot connect with religion can look for what this music and culture offer to awaken their Jewishness."

Ermi agreed. "In my life, this music has provided not only an outlet for expression, but also a connection to Judaism." □

## German official's comments on foreigners sparks outrage

By Daniel Dagan

BERLIN (JTA) — The leader of Germany's Jewish community has accused a leading political official of employing a Nazi-like selection process to determine which foreigners should be eligible to remain in the country.

In an interview with the Hamburg-based news magazine *Stern*, Ignatz Bubis lashed out at a recent declaration by Joachim Herrmann, the vice secretary-general of the Christian Social Union, who said that immigration officers should have more courage to differentiate between "very welcomed guests" as opposed to "rather undesirable aliens." The Christian Social Union is a close ally of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats Party.

The treatment of foreigners living in Germany is a controversial issue in the runup to the Sept. 27 national elections, which according to most opinion polls, will lead to Kohl's defeat. Bubis told *Stern* that when Herrmann "points out that the authorities should make a distinction between foreigners whom he would welcome and those whom he would reject, this is a terrible selection, similar to the one we knew in the past."

Bubis recalled that top Nazi official Hermann Goering once said, "It's up to me to decide who is a Jew."

"This Mr. Herrmann reminds me of that," Bubis added. "In effect he is saying: 'I am the one who decides who is a good foreigner.'" □

Herrmann did not respond to the criticism.

## Swiss bank to pay Australian

SYDNEY (JTA) — An Australian lawyer said he has again successfully settled a claim for a Holocaust-era deposit held in a dormant Swiss bank account.

Henry Burstyner reached a confidential settlement — believed to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars — for a client living in Melbourne, Australia, and for his sisters in Europe and South America. The claimants' father was a Jewish banker who reportedly had deposited a substantial sum of money in a Swiss bank account before dying in unknown circumstances during World War II.

Burstyner said the man's family had been attempting to recover the funds since 1948. Burstyner last year settled a similar claim for the family of an accountant living in Sydney, Australia.

In that case the Union Bank of Switzerland reportedly paid \$150,000. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Burial prompts anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitic placards appeared at a demonstration in St. Petersburg, Russia, where several hundred monarchists and conservative members of the Russian Orthodox Church rallied in opposition to the burial of the remains of Czar Nicholas II, his family and servants.

The burial, slated for Friday in the city's St. Peter and Paul Cathedral, is expected to be accompanied by renewed accusations of a Jewish plot to murder Russia's last czar.

### Terrorism bill clears hurdle

The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill that would require the Treasury and State departments to help American victims of state-sponsored terrorism collect damages awarded by U.S. courts.

The bill's language is intended to help the family of Alisa Flatow, an American Jewish student killed by a suicide bomber in the Gaza Strip in 1995, collect a \$247.5 million judgment against Iran.

### E.U. rejects report

The European Union voted down a report on the threat of religious fundamentalism to Europe. E.U. lawmakers said the report focused on Islam while ignoring other religions, such as Christianity.

During a debate on the report, several lawmakers cited this week's suspected murder by Protestants of three Catholic children in Northern Ireland as an example of possible threats posed by Christian fundamentalism.

### Panel mulls releasing records

A U.S. House of Representatives panel is considering legislation that would allow the release of tens of thousands of U.S. government records on Nazi war criminals.

The bill, which passed the Senate unanimously last month, would also require federal departments and agencies to expedite responses to requests from Holocaust survivors that are made under the Freedom of Information Law.

### Palestinian film protested

The inclusion of a controversial Palestinian film in a Jewish film festival prompted an outcry by some in San Francisco's Jewish community.

The film, "Al-Nakba: The Palestinian Catastrophe of 1948," is making its North American premiere at the 18th annual San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. Festival organizers defended the decision to include the film, saying it would provoke discussion about the Palestinian perspective on the creation of the Jewish state.

## Trial of Israeli who aided Iran ends amid charges of scandal

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The trial of an Israeli businessman has concluded amid charges of political and sexual misconduct, but even after the verdict came down accusations continued to fly.

The Tel Aviv District Court sentenced Nahum Manbar on Thursday to 16 years in prison for selling chemical weapons agents to Iran.

The judge in the case, Amnon Strashnov, said Manbar had sacrificed Israel's security "on the altar of unfettered greed." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu applauded the verdict, saying Manbar had committed "heinous crimes."

Manbar, who during the early 1990s sold Iran chemicals that could be used both in agriculture and in making poison gas, had faced life imprisonment.

The court refrained from sending Manbar to jail for a longer period, because it "could not ignore the norms which were in practice at the time," the judge said.

The specific reasons remained classified, but one of Manbar's main defense arguments was that he had notified Israel's secret service of his contacts with Iran.

Although the court did not hand down the maximum sentence, lead defense counsel Amnon Zichroni said he would appeal the sentence to the Supreme Court.

In the closing days of the trial, the proceedings took on a distinct political overtone, with some members of the opposition charging that Netanyahu had contacted the judge repeatedly during the trial in an effort to ensure Manbar's conviction.

Earlier this week, Netanyahu flatly denied that he had improperly interfered in the trial.

Even after the trial ended, coalition and opposition members exchanged blows over its political implications, with Netanyahu charging that members of the opposition would stop at nothing to besmirch his reputation.

The judge, too, was the focus of an attack in the trial's closing days.

In an effort to block sentencing, Zichroni appealed to the High Court of Justice, claiming that he had evidence of improper conduct in the trial.

Zichroni, who had leveled the initial charges against Netanyahu, charged that the judge was romantically involved with lawyer Pninat Yanai of the defense team, and that she had supplied him with information about the defense team's strategy in the trial. Strashnov and Yanai denied the charges.

On Tuesday, the high court rejected Zichroni's attempts to stop the trial.

As he read out the sentence, Strashnov referred to the welter of accusations, saying they were "much ado about nothing."

At a news conference, Netanyahu attacked Zichroni, saying he should be ashamed for his behavior in the case. Netanyahu also attacked members of the opposition for having exploited the case to attack him personally.

He referred specifically to Labor Knesset member Nissim Zvilli, who was the first to publicize the accusations the defense lawyer made before the high court Monday.

Zvilli also faced criticism from within his own party, where some of his colleagues charged that by presenting false accusations against the premier, Zvilli had weakened the party's legitimate offensive against Netanyahu on crucial issues such as the peace process and the economy.

Opposition leader Ehud Barak weighed in, saying it was "unacceptable" to be involved in criticism of the premier that is based on "gossip."

But Netanyahu, too, appeared not to be above using the trial to make some political accusations. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Netanyahu privately blamed former premiers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres for having failed to order the arrest of Manbar, saying they had failed to do so because of "Manbar's ties with the Labor Party."

A furious Peres called Netanyahu and told him that he and Rabin had sought to press charges against Manbar, but that there had been insufficient evidence against him at the time. Following Peres' call, Netanyahu's press adviser announced that the premier had no complaints against Rabin or Peres where the Manbar case was concerned. □

## Ohio seeks German reparations as repayment for Medicaid funds

By Marilyn H. Karfeld  
Cleveland Jewish News

CLEVELAND (JTA) — The Ohio attorney general's office has gone after the German restitution funds in a widow's estate in a bid to recover Medicaid payments.

Earlier this month, the attorney general's office sent letters to Edith Todd, seeking almost \$14,000 in repayment of Medicaid benefits from the estate of her mother, Minnie Meisner, who died a year ago. The benefits covered Meisner's care in a nursing home.

There is approximately \$4,000 in Meisner's estate, mostly German reparations she received up until her death, according to her son-in-law, Walker Todd.

The widow, 89 when she died, was married to Harry Meisner, a refugee who fled Poland and then France just ahead of the Nazi invasion. Until his death in 1973, he was receiving German restitution for confiscated property and lost career opportunities, Todd said.

As a surviving widow, Minnie Meisner received the reparations, which at the time of her death amounted to \$800 per month.

Attorney General Betty Montgomery, who was not available to comment, has directed her top attorneys to ask the state's human services department to consider that German restitution be protected from revenue recovery, said Chris Davey, communications director for the attorney general's office.

German reparations are not counted as resources when eligibility for Medicaid is being determined, but they are not exempt from recovery after the recipient has died, said Robert Byrne, assistant attorney general in charge of Medicaid revenue recovery.

"We routinely recover against exempt assets," said Byrne, who has been with the Ohio Medicaid recovery department since it opened in January 1995. But, he added that this was the first time he dealt with recovering funds from German reparations.

When Medicaid recipients die, the state tries to recover any assets they have, even ones not counted when eligibility was originally determined.

Under the Medicaid program, the federal government pays about 60 percent and the state 40 percent of benefits. The federal government requires all states with Medicaid plans to have a recovery program and any funds reclaimed are likewise split 60-40.

The original intent of the Medicaid regulation exempting German reparations was to allow recipients to keep the money, said Steven Raichilson, executive director of Menorah Park, the nursing home where Meisner lived. Raichilson said the state was proud of the fact that reparations were exempt. "Someone who is overzealous is trying to boost the bottom line on recovery."

Armond Budish, an attorney who specializes in elder law and estate planning, said the state initially didn't want to exempt German restitution funds when it was adopting regulations for Medicaid eligibility.

"We filed a class action lawsuit to allow people to protect their restitution funds," he said. While the state would not be permitted to recover German reparations, "that doesn't prevent them from trying."

In addition to German reparations, the Ohio administrative

code says compensation paid to Japanese interned in American camps during World War II, to American Indians and to those exposed to Agent Orange and radiation is not considered when deciding Medicaid eligibility. But after the individual's death, Byrne said, those payments are not exempt from recovery.

Joyce Garver Keller, a lobbyist for Ohio's Jewish communities, is distressed by the situation. "There is a sacred aspect to German reparations," she said. "It is upsetting that the state should suck it up like any other money. On the other hand, Medicaid is a welfare program for elderly poor people and the state wants to recover any money to help pay for someone else in need."

However, advised of the state's letter claiming almost \$14,000 from the Meisner estate, Garver Keller added, "This is harassment. It's outrageous. The state and federal government gives you a benefit and then seeks to be reimbursed? If the state is going to treat Medicaid as a loan and that the loan will be forgiven if you have no assets, then they should explain this to the recipient." □

## Red Cross documents enrich records of Holocaust museum

By Eric Fingerhut  
Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The International Committee of the Red Cross has donated over 10,000 pages of documents to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The documents, which came from the group's previously closed archives, represent the second part of a three-phase agreement between the Red Cross and the museum, which both sides hope will shed light on the Swiss-based humanitarian organization's role during World War II.

Radu Ionid, associate director of the museum's international programs division, said negotiations for the agreement began more than three years ago and have nothing to do with the ongoing dispute between Switzerland and Jewish groups over settling Holocaust-era claims. The first set of documents, which the museum received in December 1996, includes official reports on such matters as Red Cross rescue missions, deportation operations, delegation visits to concentration camps and ghettos, and Jewish emigration before and after the war.

The highlight of the newest batch of records is microfilm copies of a 20,000-card file from Drancy, the main transit camp in France from which Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

Ionid said the Red Cross obtained the file from the French Vichy government in 1943 and was able to use it to trace the whereabouts of prisoners. Information on the cards includes the names of prisoners, their place and date of birth, where they were interned and their date of departure for Auschwitz.

He said the information is not entirely new, but this is the first time the public can actually see the microfilmed cards. They will be available for viewing by the public later this summer. The other documents in this set are records regarding Jewish refugees, stateless people and political inmates during the 1930s, particularly 1,500 pages dealing with the fate of German Jews from 1938-39.

The third portion of the transfer, expected to take place before the end of next year, will be the largest in quantity, including approximately 200,000 documents relating to various activities of the Red Cross during this period. □