



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israel leads search effort

American and Kenyan authorities credit Israeli search teams with bringing order to chaotic rescue efforts at the site of the U.S. Embassy bombing in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Israeli teams have located at least three survivors of the blast.

Meanwhile, Israel and the United States are sharing intelligence to help find the perpetrators of both the Nairobi attack and a near-simultaneous explosion last Friday outside the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

### House backs voucher measure

The U.S. House of Representatives voted 214-208 to approve a measure that would create a school voucher program for Washington, D.C. As in years past, the House attached an amendment to the D.C. appropriations bill that would provide tuition subsidies to 2,000 low-income students in the nation's capital for use at private or parochial schools.

President Clinton vetoed the D.C. spending plan last year because of his objections to a similar voucher plan.

He also vetoed a stand-alone voucher initiative for D.C. earlier this year. [Page 3]

### U.N. body sets deadline

The United Nations disarmament body gave Israel until Tuesday to decide whether it will agree to join global negotiations to halt the production of material used to make nuclear bombs.

The United States has been pressuring Israel not to block a consensus forged among the other 60 members of the Geneva Forum.

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wanted the United States to guarantee that Israel would not face pressure to give up its reported nuclear arsenal if it joined the initiative.

### FBI blames Iran

The FBI told Argentina it believes Iranian embassy officials were involved in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Iran's foreign minister denied that his country was behind the attack, which killed 86 people and left some 300 wounded.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Germany's Jews weigh issues next government must address

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Germany's Jewish community has mixed feelings about a possible change of power in the Bonn government.

Ironically, the man who started his long term in office 16 years ago by delivering stinging rebuffs to Jewish sensibilities has won respect over the years from Jewish and Israeli leaders.

But should German Chancellor Helmut Kohl lose to Social Democratic candidate Gerhard Schroeder in the Sept. 27 national elections, some Jewish officials expect the new government to improve policy in areas of critical interest to the nation's Jews.

Kohl, who was first elected in 1982, and who later oversaw the reunification of Germany, is currently trailing in the polls.

Shortly after Kohl became chancellor, he made a much-criticized comment during a trip to Israel that he personally could not be held guilty for the Holocaust due to the "grace of his late date of birth" — he was 15 when World War II ended.

Several years later, the conservative Christian Democratic leader infuriated the international Jewish community by insisting that President Reagan visit an SS cemetery in Bitburg as a sign of U.S.-German reconciliation.

In later years, however, Kohl took a clearer stand on German responsibility for the Holocaust. In addition, under his government, tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union have been allowed to enter Germany. The influx of immigrants nearly tripled the size of the country's Jewish community, which now has more than 70,000 members.

Most Jewish leaders think that both Kohl and Schroeder would uphold Germany's commitment to Israel and to the German Jewish community.

But some think a change in government could make a difference in other areas of importance to the Jewish community: citizenship and minority rights, compensation for Holocaust survivors and measures to combat right-wing extremism.

Unlike their counterparts in the United States, Jewish voters in Germany do not form an influential block that is courted by politicians. There are too few voters and no studies exist about their voting behavior.

Just the same, Jewish leaders believe that German Jews will be keeping a keen eye on each candidate's stances on issues of Jewish interest.

Frankfurt lawyer Michel Friedman, deputy chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, believes that one of the most important issues facing the next government is compensation for Holocaust survivors. He says that the advanced age of the survivors makes it imperative for German lawmakers to work out a comprehensive solution for all, including those living in Eastern Europe.

Opposition candidate Schroeder recently backed the idea of a central compensation foundation financed in part with contributions from German firms that profited from slave labor under the Nazis. The idea was first proposed by the Green Party, which stands a good chance of entering a government coalition with Schroeder.

Micha Brumlik, an education professor at the University of Heidelberg and co-founder of a Reform Jewish community in Frankfurt, expects a center-left government to take a harder stand against right-wing extremism. Although the current government has initiated numerous programs to fight right-wing extremism, Kohl has never visited

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Ross may visit Middle East

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross agreed to visit the region within the next two weeks if there are some signs of progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai reportedly telephoned Ross to urge U.S. officials to help bring the deadlocked talks to a successful conclusion.

### Israel, Vatican disagree

Israel and the Vatican locked horns over the appointment of a new archbishop for the Galilee.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attempted to prevent the Vatican's replacing a church official in northern Israel considered friendly to the Jewish state with a Palestinian refugee.

Israel charges the Palestine Liberation Organization influenced the Vatican into making the appointment.

### Halt to transfers urged

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the head of Russia's national security council to help stop the transfer of arms technology to Iran.

The premier's meeting with Andrei Kokoshin came after Iran successfully tested a missile last month capable of striking targets in Israel, Saudi Arabia and most of Turkey.

### Palestinians back Cabinet

Palestinian legislators voted their overwhelming approval for Yasser Arafat's new Cabinet despite widespread criticism that the Palestinian leader had not eliminated those ministers responsible for widespread corruption.

Hanan Ashrawi and another minister resigned from the new Cabinet.

They said they would not support a government that was unresponsive to the demands of the Palestinian people.

the sites of extremist attacks. Brumlik believes that Social Democratic officials better understand the symbolic value of speaking out against hate attacks. He also thinks it unlikely that a far-right-wing party will garner the necessary 5 percent of the vote to enter the lower house of Parliament in the fall, in part because of rivalries among far-right parties.

However, after one far-right-wing party in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt recently captured 13 percent of the vote, he is not ruling out a repeat upset.

Should a far-right-wing party be elected into the Parliament, Brumlik says many young Jews would consider leaving Germany.

Friedman notes that Jewish leaders are "extremely disturbed about the growing success of right-wing parties at a regional level."

Concerned that voters are no longer embarrassed to vote for such parties, he is particularly worried that the two major political parties are putting so much emphasis on one of the main themes of the far right — law and order.

Both leading parties recently proposed strict new laws to combat crime, a development Friedman finds problematic because he fears such moves give new validity to extremist platforms.

He also criticizes the opposition Social Democrats for turning a proposal for a national Holocaust memorial in Berlin into an election issue.

"It is irresponsible to use this as campaign material," he says. The designated cultural expert for the opposition Social Democrats, Michael Naumann, provoked a storm of controversy in July when he announced his opposition to the project, which has been mired in controversy for a decade.

Friedman's concerns are echoed by another board member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Michael Fuerst, a lawyer in Hanover.

"The recent discussion about the monument reflects a more distanced attitude toward the past" among members of the left, Fuerst says.

"With every year that we are further apart from the Holocaust, the past is a topic that will be of less importance. It is the responsibility of the Jewish community to continually make Germans aware of this topic," Fuerst adds.

Michael Brenner, a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Munich, cites citizenship rights as another issue of importance to the Jewish community.

Unlike the United States, France and other countries, Germany continues to define citizenship through a parent's heritage, not according to place of birth.

"A center-left coalition would probably change the law to allow dual citizenship," says Brenner. "This is a measure I think the Jewish community should stand behind."

Brumlik of the University of Heidelberg agrees.

"The liberalization of immigration and citizenship laws could help reduce right-wing extremism in Germany by cutting down on xenophobia," he says.

Jewish leader Friedman is a member of Kohl's conservative party. But, unlike the chancellor, he supports liberalized citizenship laws.

"The general societal climate is of prime importance for a Jewish community," said Friedman. When intolerance begins, he warns, the Jewish minority is one of the first to be affected.

Jewish observers are also eyeing the candidates' attitudes toward Israel. The ruling conservative coalition has repeatedly sent high-ranking government officials to Israel, a move that Brenner says has been perceived positively within the Jewish community.

Although left-wing politicians have often held a more critical stance toward Israel, Jewish experts do not expect substantial policy differences toward Israel or toward the continued immigration of Russian Jews under a Social Democratic government.

Whoever wins the fall elections, Jewish leaders hope for more support for the social integration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, many of whom are unemployed.

And with the lively ongoing discussion in Germany about projects such as a Holocaust memorial, a Holocaust museum and a national German compensation fund for Holocaust survivors and other victims of the Nazis, there is certain to be a growing focus on issues of importance to the Jewish community after the next government and legislature assume office. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### House panel passes religion bill

A U.S. House of Representatives panel passed legislation intended to make it harder for government to interfere with religious practice.

The Religious Liberty Protection Act was crafted in an attempt to restore some of the protections afforded under the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which the Supreme Court struck down last year as unconstitutional.

### Judge rules against Yalies

A U.S. federal judge ruled that Yale University's policy requiring students to live in coed dormitories does not violate the religious rights of a group of Orthodox Jewish students.

The judge ruled that the students could have attended a different school if they were dissatisfied with Yale's housing policy. The four students said they would appeal the ruling.

### Poland weighs in on crosses

Poland said it wanted to help end the controversy prompted by the appearance of some 50 crosses outside the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

The government said in a statement that the controversy was harming Poland's image and straining a "well-developing Polish-Jewish dialogue." Israel called on Poland to remove the crosses, erected last month by a Catholic workers group as part of a campaign to maintain Christian symbols at the site.

### Satmar leader dies

A leading member of the U.S. Satmar Chasidic community has died. Rav Leibish Lefkowitz was one of the Satmar leaders who helped establish the Kiryas Joel community north of New York City during the 1970s. Lefkowitz, who died Aug. 7, was 78.

### French newspaper criticized

French Jewish groups, politicians and anti-racism activists blasted a far-right newspaper for calling for Nazi-era police round-ups and concentration camps to rid France of illegal immigrants.

CRIF, the umbrella group of secular French Jewish organizations, said the publication's front-page editorial was a provocation for people who had lost relatives in the Holocaust.

### U.S. Maccabi Games open

The 16th annual U.S. Jewish Community Centers Maccabi Games begins this week in Charlotte, N.C., with 1,000 competitors from American and international teams. A second tournament slated to open next week in Detroit is expected to draw 3,000 participants and 20,000 spectators. The weeklong coed sporting events are modeled on Israel's Maccabiah Games.

## Key to opening U.S. archives on Nazis sits on Clinton's desk

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Legislation that would open up thousands of classified U.S. files on alleged Nazi war criminals is awaiting President Clinton's signature.

Before adjourning for its August recess, the U.S. House of Representatives gave final approval to the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act in a unanimous vote last Friday.

The legislation, approved by the Senate in June and supported by Clinton, would create a new multiagency working group to locate, identify and recommend that the National Archives release all classified information held by the government on Nazi war criminals.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said passage of the legislation "enables us to write the last chapter of the second world war in a more accurate manner." He said that while the bill may not necessarily lead to more prosecutions of alleged war criminals, "its greater significance is the historical realm and what it tells us about the search for the truth."

The government has been gradually releasing information it gathered during the war, but some federal agencies, including the CIA and the State Department, have refused to declassify certain documents, citing national security.

"Some of the information might prove embarrassing for the United States," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), who sponsored the bill in the House. "But there are important lessons to be learned from some of those documents."

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), who co-sponsored the Senate bill with Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), said the documents "have been held far too long, well beyond the time when their disclosure might have posed a threat to national security."

"Those who suffered from the Holocaust are reaching the end of their life span. We owe it to them to make available as much information about that terrible period as possible," Moynihan said. □

## House makes another attempt to get school vouchers for D.C.

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The U.S. House of Representatives is refusing to let its school voucher plan for the District of Columbia die.

As in years past, the House, in a mostly party-line 214-208 vote, tacked an amendment on to the spending bill for Washington that would provide tuition subsidies for students in the nation's capital to use at private or religious schools.

President Clinton vetoed the D.C. spending plan last year because of his objections to a similar voucher plan. Congress returned the bill without the voucher provisions and Clinton signed it. This April, Congress passed a stand-alone voucher initiative, prompting another presidential veto.

The Orthodox Union, one of the leading proponents of school vouchers in the Jewish community, said that despite earlier vetoes, it hoped Clinton "will pause for a moment and consider the opportunity that the passage of this legislation provides."

Nathan Diament, director of the O.U.'s Institute for Public Affairs, said Washington should be allowed to serve as a laboratory to "test the thesis of whether voucher plans can provide children with greater educational opportunities."

Other Jewish groups said they would urge Clinton to veto the initiative yet again.

David Harris, director of the American Jewish Congress' Washington office, said the notion of using Washington as a testing lab "totally disregards the will of its residents." The measure would provide up to \$3,200 in tuition subsidies to 2,000 low-income students for use at the private or parochial school of their choice.

The Clinton administration said in a statement that the voucher program would "draw resources and attention away from the hard work of reforming public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of D.C. students." □

## New rules pose hardships for rabbis working in Russia

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A new measure adopted by the Russian Foreign Ministry is making life more difficult for foreign representatives of religious organizations working here.

Last month, the ministry adopted a rule requiring these workers to obtain a new visa every three months — instead of being able to get the one-year, multiple-entry visas issued to other foreign nationals who want to work in Russia.

Under the new rule, foreigners working with religious groups are now forced to leave four times a year and obtain a new visa at a Russian Consulate in their home country before they can return to Russia.

The reason for the measure is not clear. One government official speculated that it might simply be a way of making more money for government coffers. Others suggested that the rule may just be an example of Russian bureaucracy — indeed, a Foreign Ministry official could not even confirm that the regulation exists.

Foreign workers representing various religions — Jews, Baptists, evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics — said they have already experienced problems with the new law.

A clerk with Chabad-Lubavitch in Moscow, who handles visas for 35 American and Israeli rabbis working in congregations across Russia, said she first encountered the rule last month.

The clerk, Elena Murlyukova, said in an interview that she eventually obtained a one-year visa for a Lubavitch rabbi that classified him as a cultural worker rather than as a religious worker. One-year, multiple-entry visas continue to be granted to foreigners interested in living in Russia for business or cultural reasons.

Some experts on religion, as well as some Christian priests and missionaries, say the regulation stems from a 1997 Russian law on religion, which requires branches of all faiths that cannot prove they have existed in Russia for at least 15 years to register with local authorities.

But Jewish religious leaders say the new visa regulation cannot be directly associated with that much-criticized law.

Judaism, Russian Orthodoxy, Islam and Buddhism were all granted full rights according to the 1997 law, though a few Jewish groups have faced difficulties from local authorities since it was passed.

The new rule is “not aimed against certain religions,” Rabbi Berel Lazar, chief emissary for Lubavitch in the former Soviet Union, said in a telephone interview from Italy. “All religions — even Russian Orthodoxy — are included” in the new measure.

But one Jewish official in Moscow insisted the rule could specifically harm Jews and Roman Catholics because a majority of the rabbis and Catholic priests working in Russia are foreign nationals.

The executive director of the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Communities of Russia gave the example of Moscow’s chief rabbi, Pinchas Goldschmidt, who is Swiss.

“He is based here and we need him all the time,” said Zinovy Kogan. “I’m not even talking about the money and paperwork we would need to send him, his wife and six children back and forth every three months. This will quadruple our costs in time and

money.” The Lubavitch movement’s Lazar said the new rule could be sidestepped by having non-religious organizations invite rabbis to Russia. □

## O.U. encouraging synagogues to open up to Jewish deaf, blind

By Julia Strongwater

NEW YORK (JTA) — When Terri Landon attends synagogue, she cannot hear the service.

Landon, a 19-year-old student at Brown University, is deaf, and though she can read lips it is difficult for her to follow a service that alternates between English and Hebrew.

It is a challenge Landon shares with many other Jews who are hearing or visually impaired.

“The majority of deaf, blind and visually impaired Jews never attend synagogue, and those who do go to services often miss the meaning of the ritual,” said Rabbi Eliezer Lederfeind, director of the Orthodox Union’s program for the deaf and blind.

Indeed, few synagogues across the country have made an effort to reach out to such Jews. Tiferes Israel, for example, an Orthodox synagogue in Baltimore, provides an interpreter for deaf synagogue attendees. In New York, Congregation B’nai Jeshurun has large-print prayer books available for blind congregants — and a sign-language interpreter about twice a month.

“Because deaf and visually impaired people are not generally associated with synagogues, the synagogues have not been motivated to provide services,” Lederfeind said. “And because the services are not there, the deaf and visually impaired tend to stay away.”

In an effort to encourage synagogues to service the hearing and visually impaired, the O.U. has developed a guide for reaching out to blind and deaf Jews. The O.U. suggests that congregations:

- designate specific seats for the deaf to make it easier for them to see the interpreter or read the lips of those who read the Torah and lead services;
- provide prayer books in English because deaf people usually have difficulty with foreign languages;
- provide large-print prayer books;
- encourage synagogue members to interact with those congregants who have disabilities.

Landon said the suggestions in the guide would make the synagogue a more comfortable environment for her and would make it easier for her to participate in services.

“The guide is a wonderful idea because it is important to involve the entire Jewish community in services,” she said.

The Reform and Conservative movements also have programs to assist deaf and blind synagogue members.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations’ Lehiyot program recruits the Jewish disabled by publicizing which temples have provisions for people with disabilities.

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism also offers programs for deaf and blind congregants, including the distribution of large-print prayer books. The three synagogue movements are expected to participate in a project to be launched this fall, coordinated by the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, that would recruit disabled people to participate in Jewish communal life. □