



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Survivors can apply

Some \$31.4 million from a Swiss humanitarian fund for needy Holocaust survivors will be divided among qualified applicants in the United States soon after a Nov. 30 application deadline.

The toll-free number for those American survivors seeking to apply for monies from the fund is (800) 549-6864. Some survivors in Eastern Europe have already received payouts from the fund, which totals approximately \$185 million.

### Attention turns to German banks

The leader of Germany's Jewish community said he was confident that two of the country's largest private banks would soon settle an \$18 billion class-action suit filed by U.S. Holocaust survivors.

Ignatz Bubis made the prediction days after Switzerland's two largest commercial banks reached a \$1.25 billion settlement of Holocaust-era claims. The class-action suit against Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank accuses them of knowingly trading in gold looted from Jews during the Holocaust.

### Insurer poised to settle

A leading European insurance firm is poised to pay at least \$65 million to settle claims that it refused to honor the policies of Eastern European Holocaust survivors after World War II.

A spokesman for the Italian firm, Assicurazioni Generali, confirmed news of the settlement, which was announced by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato.

### Premier addresses bombing

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the bomb that killed 28 people in Northern Ireland over the weekend should not derail peace efforts in the region. "Such crimes must not be allowed to wreck what the seekers of peace are trying to build," Netanyahu said in a letter to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

### Curfew lifted on Jericho

Palestinian security forces lifted a curfew on Jericho after announcing that the Hamas militant they were seeking had already fled the town. Imad Awadallah escaped from a Palestinian jail on Saturday, four months after being detained on allegations that he killed bomb-maker Mohiyedine Sharif.

## Trial of admitted Nazi hinges on veracity of witness memory

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — Is Jakob Reimer a perpetrator of horrors against Polish Jews during the Holocaust or is he a victim of time and place, a former prisoner of war who suffered at the hands of Nazis?

In the first Nazi trial ever held in Manhattan, the U.S. government has sought to strip Reimer of his U.S. citizenship as a preliminary step toward deporting him because he allegedly lied on his application to enter the United States in 1952.

Judge Lawrence McKenna's verdict in the trial, which is slated to conclude this week, is not expected for several months.

Prosecutors said during the trial that Reimer would have been denied admission to the United States if he had admitted then, as he did in 1992, that he had murdered a Jew in a Nazi camp and that he was part of a unit responsible for some of the worst wartime atrocities in Poland.

While the trial in Federal District Court is, officially, a technical proceeding related only to Reimer's citizenship, the testimony offered by a historian, several Holocaust survivors and the former resident of Eastern Europe himself have presented a dramatic re-creation of history.

A core issue in Reimer's trial has been memory.

According to his attorney, Ramsey Clark, the memories of Reimer and the survivors who testified against him are unreliable.

"With all these trials we're seeing testimony entered from the 1940s, the '60s and the '80s.

"It varies tremendously," Clark said in a brief interview with JTA outside the courtroom.

"It's basically a product of human memory," he said.

As a result the truth is impossible to establish, Clark, a former U.S. attorney general, said in his opening argument.

Survivors who testified spoke of the cruelty they had witnessed at several ghettos in Poland, but none could identify Reimer.

Reimer's memory held clear recollections of the rose bushes outside the houses in the small village where he grew up in Ukraine — and of his stopping to buy vodka on the way to joining his regiment as an officer in the Soviet army when World War II broke out.

He was one of some 2,500 Ukrainian prisoners held by the Germans who were made auxiliary S.S. troops at the Trawniki training camp, located near Lublin in eastern Poland.

He fondly remembered dinners with his girlfriend's parents while his unit was stationed in the Polish town of Czestochowa beginning in September 1942.

But while in Czestochowa, Lublin and Warsaw, Reimer testified, he knew nothing of the persecutions by Trawniki men in those cities' ghettos.

"I have no recollection of screams," Reimer said while being questioned by his attorney.

"I never saw the ghettos. I never saw anyone shot or pushed around. I never have seen any cruelties in Czestochowa or anyplace else," he said.

Approximately 50,000 Jews were confined in Czestochowa's ghetto and, with the assistance of the Trawniki men, most were sent to their deaths at Treblinka during a less-than-two-week period in the fall of 1942.

While Reimer has maintained that he mainly served as an office administrator in

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Cabinet approves barriers

Israel's Security Cabinet approved a plan to set up barriers in the West Bank to fight car theft.

Hawkish politicians oppose the plan, fearing it would give shape to a future Palestinian state. About 80 percent of the record 46,000 cars stolen last year in Israel were smuggled into the West Bank.

### Hussein gives powers to brother

Jordan's King Hussein gave his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, more power over the country's governmental affairs. Hussein sent the directive from his hospital bed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., where he is undergoing cancer treatment.

### Israel, Vatican dispute near end

An end to the dispute between Israel and the Vatican over the appointment of a new Palestinian bishop to the Galilee appeared to be imminent.

An Israeli spokesman said Israel would not oppose the appointment of Boutros Mouallem if it received assurances that he would not engage in political activity.

### Arafat returns early

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat returned to Gaza 12 hours ahead of schedule after South African security services received reports of a possible assassination attempt.

Palestinian Authority officials refused to comment on the threat or its possible source.

### Rescue team welcomed

Israel's rescue team returned from Nairobi to a hero's welcome at a ceremony attended by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Edward Walker, among others.

The rescue team is credited with saving lives and bringing order to a chaotic operation after last week's bombing of the U.S. Embassy there.



## Daily News Bulletin

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charge of distributing payroll to the Ukrainians, the prosecution's main witness said it would have been impossible for Reimer to have remained unaware of the murders of Jews.

"As soon as the death camps were up and running, Sobibor in May 1942 and Treblinka in July 1942, Trawniki men brought back tales of what they saw there," said Charles Sydnor, a historian specializing in the Nazi era.

Memory propelled many of the several dozen spectators to come to the grand cherry-wood and bronze-decorated courtroom each day. Many were elderly.

Some were survivors themselves of Nazi persecution. Others, like Bernie Alexander, were young.

The 29-year-old middle-school guidance counselor, who wears a black kippah and lives in Queens, was the only spectator who attended the trial every day.

"I felt it was important to go to show that even people of my generation are not forgetting," he said in an interview in the courthouse cafeteria, as Reimer and Clark ate their lunch just two tables away.

For the prosecution too, the core issue has been memory — and the importance of not forgetting that within the vastness of the murder of 6 million Jews lie the specific criminal acts that made it possible.

The U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations has tried some 107 Nazis and their collaborators — stripping 59 of their citizenship — since its creation in 1979.

The current memory of defendants is important but the Nazi-hunting unit does not rely on memories alone.

OSI's 10 attorneys and seven staff historians piece together history as they work.

It is put into place one document at a time as papers are culled from the depths of archives in the former Soviet Union and Germany and from testimony in other Nazis' trials in the United States and those countries during the last 35 years.

They also travel great distances to add additional small pieces to the mosaic.

In Reimer's case, the lead prosecutor, Edward Stutman, and an OSI historian journeyed to the Ural Mountains to interview another former Trawniki guard who, at a 1964 Soviet war crimes trial, testified that Reimer had led his troop on a killing mission near Lublin.

Some 250 Jews died as a result of that mission.

In his ordinariness — then, as a handsome man in his 20s and now, as a somewhat wizened man of 79, whose thick brown hair has turned white — Reimer, and his story, are remarkable.

As an ethnic German, born to German parents and raised speaking German alone, his ability to translate between Russian and German made him valuable to the Trawniki guards.

Reimer was promoted to the highest rank that a Ukrainian could achieve, Sydnor testified.

The Nazis also rewarded him with two medals, one for bravery, which was not often done for Trawniki men, he said.

By his own admission, Reimer trained a company of Ukrainian recruits, teaching them basic German military commands.

But at the trial, the prosecution argued that Reimer also taught the recruits how to shoot.

In a sworn interview with OSI officials in May 1992 Reimer admitted shooting a Jewish man in the winter of 1941-1942.

The man was nearly buried by 40 to 60 corpses in a pit just outside the Trawniki training camp, near Lublin.

In that interview, Reimer said he had overslept that day.

When he came late to the action, he saw the man pointing to his head, and, at close range, "finished him off."

In a 1997 deposition, Reimer said he had shot over the pit of dead bodies in order not to hit anyone.

But on the stand last week, his recollection seemed to shift once again.

"I don't know why it comes into my head that somebody moved or pointed to his head. It's possible" that someone did, Reimer testified. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Elzenstat urges agreement

The top U.S. official involved in the settlement talks between Holocaust survivors and Swiss banks is urging Jewish groups to come to an agreement on how to spend the \$1.25 billion settlement reached last week.

Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Stuart Elzenstat said in an interview with the Jerusalem Post that Jewish groups involved in the process should take their cue from survivors and proceed in a "dignified and orderly way" to avoid an "unseemly disagreement in court."

### Swiss insurer signs agreement

Switzerland's largest insurance company said it has signed a memorandum of understanding with U.S. regulators to establish a committee to find and compensate Holocaust survivors and their heirs for policies dating back to World War II.

The move by Zurich Allied came in the wake of last week's \$1.25 billion settlement between Holocaust survivors and Swiss banks.

That settlement excluded insurers in the Alpine nation, which face hundreds of millions of dollars in claims.

### Poles weigh in on crosses

More than 70 percent of Poles polled say they want to keep a large cross standing near the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

But 48 percent of those surveyed said they do not back the new crosses that Catholic activists have set up near the site in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, a Polish Catholic activist said he wanted more crosses put up near the site of the Auschwitz death camp.

The activist, Kazimierz Switon, said he wanted a total of 152 crosses, each at least 9 feet high, to surround a large cross under which Pope John Paul II prayed in 1979.

### Hitler painting found

Police in Spain recovered a painting done by Adolf Hitler.

"Women in Blue," which was stolen last April, was found along with three other paintings by other artists.

### Action urged on memorial

A German Jewish leader called for an end to delays over a proposed national Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

Ignatz Bubis said the plan for the memorial, which have been mired in controversy for more than a decade, were being stalled by what he called flimsy arguments.

## Palestinian children's show sparks anger in Washington

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Incensed that the Palestinian Authority has not pulled the plug on children's television shows glorifying violence against Israelis, the U.S. Congress is set to ban all American support for the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation.

Lawmakers hope that the symbolic move — the State Department actually ended financial support to the network three years ago — will send a signal to Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat that the United States will not stand by while a new generation of Palestinians are taught the glory of violence.

Before leaving for its August recess the Senate, by a 99-0 vote, approved a bill that includes a ban on funds for the Palestinian network.

While the House version of the bill that funds the Commerce, State and Justice departments does not contain a formal amendment to prohibit funding of the broadcasting company, the ban is supported in a report that accompanies the bill. Lawmakers hope that a conference committee of senators and congressmen who will meet to hammer out the differences between the two versions will include the ban in the final bill.

For many on Capitol Hill and in the Jewish community, the issue goes deeper than the controversy over U.S. aid to the Palestinians.

If the Palestinian children are taught to hate Israelis and use violent means to express this hatred, peace between the two sides may never take hold, activists say. In addition, the Palestinian media is filled with statements of Holocaust denial and anti-Israel propaganda that, according to Israel and the United States, violate provisions of the Oslo accords.

"You have these types of broadcasts with people play-acting suicide bombers and fulfilling violent missions in life. That's not the message we should be teaching," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican Jewish group, which led the lobbying effort against the network.

The controversy over aid to the broadcasting corporation began in March when an Israeli group, Peace for Generations, began distributing tapes of the "Children's Club." Loosely based on "Sesame Street," the program shows a group of children with an adult performing skits. On an episode aired July 2, young boys, with arms raised, chanted, "We are ready with our guns, we are ready with our guns. Revolution until victory, Revolution until victory."

On the same show, a boy about 8 years old stood before the group of children and announced, "I come to say that we will throw them to the quiet sea. Occupiers, your day is near, then we will settle our account. We will settle our claims with stones and bullets." On a Feb. 6 show, a young girl about 10 promised to "turn into a suicide warrior" in Jerusalem.

While top officials in the Clinton administration have expressed their outrage at the pro-violence, anti-Israel programming, the administration has yet to adopt a formal stance on the issue.

Since 1994, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, which also runs a radio station, has received about \$500,000 from various U.S. federal agencies. Initially founded as a separate entity, the television station has been considered by the U.S. government to be a direct arm of the Palestinian Authority since 1995; and since that time has not been able to receive U.S. funds directly.

In 1997, the United States Information Agency renewed its relationship with the network after Israel agreed that the Palestinians should receive satellite equipment to broadcast American television shows. Other than supplying two satellite dishes, U.S. officials have nothing to do directly with the network, but individual reporters can attend U.S.-sponsored workshops.

The State Department is now focusing on developing independent media centers to train Palestinian journalists. U.S. officials plan to open a West Bank center later this year in addition to one in Gaza opened last year. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Premier, defense minister locked in tense relationship***By David Landau*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been locked in a roller-coaster relationship with his defense minister that is fueling speculation about the country's next election.

Some observers believe that Yitzhak Mordechai could emerge as Netanyahu's strongest challenger in the race for the Likud Party's candidate for prime minister.

Indeed, it was this feeling that generated so much speculation about a recent series of secret meetings between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition Labor Party, Ehud Barak.

Netanyahu and Barak confirmed, once their meetings were leaked to the media, that they had discussed the possibility of forming a national unity government.

Under such a government, Barak would become defense minister — a move that would leave Mordechai out in the cold.

This prospect could not have been lost on Netanyahu.

If the premier was indeed setting a trap, then Mordechai obliged by appearing to walk straight into it.

As word of the Netanyahu-Barak meetings leaked, Mordechai fired off a series of statements that he was going to be Israel's minister of defense for a long time to come.

He maintained, moreover, that the present government must jump-start the deadlocked negotiations with the Palestinians and agree to a further redeployment in the West Bank.

Mordechai's statements confirmed that he is opposing the creation of a national unity government as a result of what appear to be personal interests. Because a unity government is popular with the electorate, as all opinion polls consistently show, this position is bound to damage Mordechai's public standing.

Israeli opposition figures, meanwhile, put the national unity talks in the context of what they insist are the deep differences between Netanyahu and Mordechai over the stalled peace process.

Mordechai, they say, wants an agreement with the Palestinians not merely to keep Barak out of the Defense Ministry, but because he genuinely believes in the need to move forward with the Oslo process.

They add that this explains his willingness last month to take on an assignment from Netanyahu to meet with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, in an effort to negotiate a breakthrough.

This also explains Mordechai's anger and frustration when he found that he did not, in fact, have a mandate from the premier to reach a deal with his Palestinian counterpart.

Netanyahu's reluctance to authorize a compromise grated on Mordechai, who is uncomfortable carrying the direct responsibility for the army during this period of diplomatic gridlock, which could rapidly deteriorate into violence.

Complicating his efforts to move the peace process forward, Mordechai has no strong Cabinet allies to help him pressure the premier.

The defense minister has often voiced his regret at the secession of former Foreign Minister David Levy and his small Geshar faction from the government.

Levy, too, was a relative moderate who strove to push the peace process forward.

Mordechai's tensions with Netanyahu and his fellow ministers flared up again at Sunday's weekly Cabinet session.

The disagreement centered on an interview Mordechai gave to the German news magazine Focus in which the defense minister appeared to be contemplating a major withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

The magazine had Mordechai, in effect, repeating the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's statement that the depth of Israel's Golan withdrawal would be proportional to the depth of peace established with Syria.

The implication of this formula has always been that if Syria were ready for full peace and normalization, with iron-clad security arrangements on the ground, Israel would be prepared to hand back all of the strategic area.

It is for this reason that Syrian President Hafez Assad has repeatedly insisted that his country's negotiations with Israel, suspended since March 1996, be resumed at the point where they left off with the previous, Labor-led government.

The Netanyahu government has consistently coated its Golan policy with a deliberate layer of vagueness.

But beneath that is an insistence, enshrined in party platforms and in official government statements, that Israel would never cede all of the Golan — under any conditions.

Small wonder, then, that a number of ministers assailed Mordechai at Sunday's Cabinet meeting, among them Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, leader of the Third Way Party, which ran in the 1996 election on a single-issue, save-the-Golan platform.

Nor were these ministers mollified when Mordechai appeared reluctant to back away from what he, nonetheless, insisted was an inaccurately quoted statement in the Focus interview.

In television interviews after the Cabinet meeting, Mordechai said his position was different from Rabin's, but he did not succeed in explaining to his interviewers or to the public how it was different.

Adding to the impression that he was his own man within the hard-line Cabinet, Mordechai stressed Sunday that what he really wanted was to discuss the issues with the Syrians themselves to hear how they would respond to Israel's security requirements.

Mordechai maintained that he had gotten Netanyahu to agree to such a meeting, but this rang somewhat hollow against the backdrop of reports that same day indicating that the two had had a head-on collision over — of all things — municipal elections in Tiberias. Mordechai's brother, Motti, would-be leader of the Likud faction in that resort city, has claimed that he is being shunted aside by other party activists with Netanyahu's direct blessing.

In fact, a deal crowning another candidate as faction leader was signed in Netanyahu's office last Friday — at the same time that Netanyahu was assuring his defense minister that nothing of the kind would be allowed to happen.

This episode might have been viewed by Israel's cynical political observers as insignificant were it not for the pervasive feeling that Netanyahu feels threatened by the popular defense minister.

While the episode involving the Tiberias elections was seen by some as comical, it remains to be seen if Mordechai's series of grievances grow into a real rift with the prime minister. □