



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Italian firm agrees to settlement

An Italian insurance firm agreed today to pay \$700 million as part of a settlement of a class-action lawsuit filed by Holocaust survivors.

The payout agreed to by Assicurazioni Generali is a first payment "toward moral and material restitution" by the company, according to officials at the World Jewish Congress who participated in the negotiations.

Generali's board of directors is expected to meet later this month to approve the agreement. A commission will examine the company's archives, which could lead to Generali paying additional monies. [Page 3]

### Reimer: 'Absolutely not' a Nazi

Jakob Reimer said he was "absolutely not" a Nazi.

Reimer, who spent time in the Trawniki training camp in Poland during World War II, made his comments while being cross-examined by prosecutors with the U.S. government, which is trying to revoke Reimer's citizenship for lying on his U.S. visa application after the war.

The 79-year-old former resident of Ukraine has insisted throughout the trial that he was merely a Nazi prisoner.

A decision on the case is not expected for several months.

### Court strikes down school law

A U.S. court struck down a federal law that allowed public school systems to loan books and computers to parochial schools.

In making the ruling, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the law violated the separation between church and state. The court did uphold two state laws that allow taxes to be used to pay bus drivers and special education teachers who work for church-run schools.

### Bodies to be flown to Israel

Israeli and Polish institutes agreed to fly the remains of Jews buried in Poland before and during the Holocaust to Israel.

Under the agreement, Jews who know the precise burial location of their relatives will have their bodies exhumed and identified before they are sent to the Jewish state.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Concern over Swiss settlement: Will money be last word on Shoah?

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Will money be the last word on the Holocaust?

In the wake of last week's Swiss banks settlement, Holocaust scholars and survivors are voicing concern that the publicity surrounding such monetary settlements may overshadow the memory and lessons of the Nazi genocide against the Jewish people.

"I'm not sure how much it will be worth if the result is going to be a simple sound bite: 'Jews died because of their money,'" Abraham Foxman, a survivor who is the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said in an interview after the settlement was announced.

Switzerland's two largest commercial banks agreed after months of negotiations with attorneys and Jewish groups representing survivors to pay \$1.25 billion over a three-year period to settle all Holocaust-era claims against Swiss interests, except insurance firms. On the morning after the settlement was reached, national headlines declared: "Jews Hail Money Settlement."

The settlement is the first in what are now expected to be large monetary settlements with European companies and governments regarding claims on bank accounts, unpaid insurance policies and stolen artworks.

"The longer this dragged, the more the press got into it, it became a circus relating to Jews and their money, Jews and their bank accounts, Jews and their gold, Jews and their Stradivariuses, Jews and their Picassos," said Foxman.

Many in the Jewish community who work to preserve the memory of the Holocaust now fear that in some way the tragic legacy of European Jewry will be twisted by squabbles over looted assets.

One part of the concern is "the real crime, the crime of genocide" will be overshadowed by monetary concerns, said Michael Berenbaum, president of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation in Los Angeles.

But while Berenbaum and others believe that the concentrated attention paid to the details of negotiations and distributions will take precedence over commemoration and moral lessons for the moment, the former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's research institute said he was sure that in the long run, "the ultimate crime will come to the fore."

His confidence stems from the fact that "there are important projects for remembrance that will be here years from now" dedicated to preserving the memory of Holocaust victims.

Stuart Eizenstat, the Clinton administration's point man on Holocaust restitution, stressed that Holocaust education in Europe would be one of the most important outgrowths of the settlement, because it "will outlive the survivors and all of us."

This will lead to more "sensitive and moral" people in the future and "more just policies by countries," Eizenstat, U.S. undersecretary of state for economic affairs, said in a telephone interview following the Swiss agreement.

Establishing Holocaust education in schools is one of the projects the State Department is "most pushing for" as it pursues settlements with America's European allies, Eizenstat said.

Were it not for the proliferation in recent years of Holocaust institutions and educational programs in the United States, others point out, the current claims would

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon

Israeli planes attacked suspected Hezbollah targets in the southern Lebanon security zone after an Israeli soldier was killed earlier in the day. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the roadside bomb that killed 21-year-old Ori Samuelov. Four other Israeli soldiers were wounded in the attack, which took place near an Israeli army post that was infiltrated by Hezbollah fighters last week.

### Norway presses Netanyahu

A top Norwegian official called on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to reconsider his decision not to attend next month's ceremony marking the fifth anniversary of the Oslo accords.

The Israeli premier said he would not participate in the ceremony because he did not take part in the accords.

### Palestinians arrest Islamic leader

Palestinian security forces arrested a leader of the Islamic Jihad. Abdallah Shami was detained following an article that he had written that was critical of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

### Israelis arrest tombstone-maker

Israeli police arrested an Arab tombstone-maker alleged to have paid a Palestinian teen-ager to demolish tombstones on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

The teen-ager has reportedly confessed to having destroyed 30 tombstones during the past eight months.

### Mideast papers on Monicagate

Syria's official newspaper said Israel supported the recent escalation of the scandal surrounding President Clinton in order to neutralize the American role in the Middle East peace process. A newspaper in Iran claimed that Clinton was the victim of a "Zionist backlash."



## Daily News Bulletin

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never have received the support of American politicians whose efforts in Congress and at the state and local levels brought pressure upon the Swiss banks to settle.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg, president of the Jewish Life Network, a group that develops continuity programs, called the restitution efforts made by national and local politicians "a moral breakthrough."

"People are now in favor of memory instead of against it," Greenberg said. "It means we really got the message across."

Greenberg, who also is a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, said the Swiss banks settlement "will be a further stimulus" to preserving the memory of the systematic murder of 6 million Jews.

The publicity surrounding the Swiss-Jewish negotiations "is a further reminder of what was done or not done in the Holocaust," he said.

Benjamin Meed, the president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, said the issue behind the Swiss negotiations and similar restitution talks is not one of money, but of morality.

"It's a question of how do we complete the 20th century and how we should enter the 21st century," Meed said.

One of this country's leading Holocaust scholars agreed.

"This is not reparation, this is not guilt money," said Deborah Lipstadt, a professor of Holocaust Studies at Emory University in Atlanta.

"This is the plain old result of attempted robbery by banks," Lipstadt said.

"We're talking about goods and valuables because the people are gone," she added.

For the Holocaust survivors, most of whom are now in their 80s, who will receive some payment from the settlement, there is another concern — that a well-publicized fight for their rightful possessions, more than 50 years after World War II, will be a sorry postscript to their own lives.

Noting the embarrassment engendered by the unpleasant episode, Greenberg said, "The fact is the banks are returning a fraction of what they stole" and that the settlement money "is going to be used primarily to ease the isolation and poverty of survivors."

Greenberg added: "It is perverse to question either one of those. It should be a matter of pride and responsibility that those steps are being taken. Saying that taking money is cheapening is perverse.

"It's the least we could do for the survivors and the least the banks could do," he said. □

(JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington contributed to this report.)

## Israeli soldier dies in Lebanon

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The fundamentalist Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for the death of an Israeli soldier in southern Lebanon.

Ori Samuelov, of Mevasseret Zion near Jerusalem, was killed Wednesday by a roadside bomb detonated near his army patrol.

Four other Israeli soldiers were wounded in the explosion that killed the 21-year-old Samuelov.

He was the 10th Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon this year.

The attack took place near an Israeli paratroopers outpost in the security zone that was the site of an attack last week, when one Hezbollah gunman managed to enter the outpost.

He fled after a fistfight with an Israeli soldier.

The Israeli army chief of staff took disciplinary action against several officers and soldiers in the wake of that incident.

Shortly after Wednesday's attack, Israeli soldiers and Hezbollah fighters exchanged heavy fire.

The Israeli air force struck at Hezbollah targets in the eastern part of the security zone.

Maj. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi said roadside bombs remain the "major threat" to Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Italian insurance firm agrees to settle Holocaust survivors suit

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Italian insurance firm has agreed to pay \$100 million as part of a settlement of a class-action lawsuit filed last year by Holocaust survivors and the heirs of victims.

The payout agreed to by Assicurazioni Generali is a first payment "toward moral and material restitution" by the company, according to officials at the World Jewish Congress who participated in the negotiations.

Assicurazioni Generali's board of directors is expected to meet Aug. 28 to approve the agreement.

"This settlement will ensure substantial relief to survivors of the Holocaust and their heirs in the most timely manner possible," said the vice general director of Generali, Guido Pastori.

The settlement reached Wednesday comes just one week after Switzerland's two largest commercial banks agreed to pay \$1.25 billion to settle all Holocaust-era claims against Swiss interests.

But that deal did not include insurance firms.

The Italian firm's agreement to pay survivors and heirs of Holocaust victims also comes as pressure was mounting from state insurance commissioners across the United States.

Earlier this year, California had threatened to revoke Generali's operating license if the Italian concern did not cooperate in resolving claims on unpaid policies taken out by Jews in the 1930s.

Nearly one-fifth of Generali's business in the United States is conducted in California.

Senate Banking Committee chairman Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who participated in the negotiations, called the settlement with Generali a "breakthrough."

Generali is the first European insurance agency to reach an agreement to settle with the heirs of Holocaust victims.

Negotiators hope that the agreement will prompt other such insurance agencies to come forward to rectify their World War II accounts with victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

Under the agreement, Generali will cooperate with a commission set up together with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

The commission will examine the company's archives, which could lead to Generali paying additional monies.

Last January, word spread that the company had nearly complete records of its prewar policies in a warehouse in Trieste.

A CD-ROM the insurance firm had created with the names of 384,000 policy holders closely matched lists of Holocaust victims that have been compiled from Nazi archives. □

### Car breaks through roadblock

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A car broke through a police roadblock near the hotel in Tiberias where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is vacationing with his family.

Police believed that the man had broken through the roadblock in the city in northeastern Israel because he was frustrated by the traffic jams created by security arrangements near the hotel — and not because he wanted to harm the Israeli premier or his family.

The Netanyahu family was inside the hotel at the time of the incident.

Israeli police later located the car in Tiberias, a resort town, but were unable to find the driver.

Three policemen were slightly hurt in the escapade. □

### Poland takes control of field

The Polish government took legal control of a field outside the site of the Auschwitz death camp, where fundamentalist Polish Catholics have recently erected crosses.

A member of the Polish war victims group that held the lease to the land said he would fight the move in court.

Jewish groups and Polish bishops have demanded the removal of the crosses.

Backed by some hard-line priests, radical Catholics began setting up the crosses just outside the walls of the former Nazi death camp at the end of July to protest the possible removal of a 21-foot cross that stands there.

That cross was used by the Pope in a mass at Auschwitz in 1979.

Kazimierz Switon, the radical Catholic activist who organized the actions, called this week for supporters to place even more crosses at the site — defying several Polish bishops, local and international Jewish organizations, Polish media and other groups.

### Lawyer presses Austrian bank

A lawyer said he would include an Austrian bank in a lawsuit filed against German banks for Holocaust-era claims if the bank did not agree to talks before midnight Wednesday.

Officials with Creditanstalt responded to Ed Fagan's charge by saying that while they would consider any "serious" proposal for settling the claims, they were not willing to deal with ultimatums. Pressure on European banks to settle such claims has increased since two commercial Swiss banks agreed last week to a global settlement of claims against them.

### Argentine police launches inquiry

Argentine police launched an investigation into a meeting of neo-Nazis held last weekend at a Catholic school in Buenos Aires.

The meeting, which was reportedly attended by about 50 people, was billed as a history teachers conference.

### Neo-Nazi runs for Parliament

A convicted neo-Nazi bomber is one of the top candidates for a far-right party in the upcoming German national elections.

The National Democratic Party announced that Manfred Roeder will launch the final part of its election campaign this weekend under the slogan "Jobs for Germans First."

A scandal erupted in Germany last December, when it was discovered that Roeder had given a speech at an elite officers academy.

## Orthodox strive to balance priorities in glitz of Hollywood

By Beverly Gray

*Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — It's late Friday afternoon, and a roomful of Hollywood deal-makers are locked in negotiations over a pending film project when one studio executive checks his watch and curtly announces, "We close this deal in the next five minutes because my man is going home."

In those next five minutes, a deal is hammered out and a high-ranking Warner Bros. business affairs official rushes out the door in time for Shabbat dinner.

A generation ago, Hollywood Jews were overwhelmingly secular in their personal lives.

Common wisdom had it that a show-business career and religious observance simply didn't mix.

These days, however, with Hollywood's newfound acceptance of religion and spirituality, there is a surprising — and growing — number of young Orthodox Jews mixed in among the industry's movers and shakers.

Orthodox Jews write for Jay Leno and Bill Cosby, hold front-office positions at Disney and Warner Bros., serve as personal managers and compose film scores.

Though observant actors are still hard to find, Steven Hill of the television show "Law and Order" manages to meld a long-running series with an Orthodox lifestyle.

David Steinberg, production executive for Walt Disney Feature Animation, believes his kippah looks like just one more Los Angeles style choice. "There's so many unique lifestyles in Southern California that I just fit right in," says Steinberg, who works among animators who lean toward rainbow hair, piercings and tattoos.

Despite a tolerant atmosphere, which may extend to serving kosher food at staff lunches, Orthodox Jews in Hollywood sometimes have to make hard choices. Particularly in television, they face schedules built around Friday-night tapings and Saturday story conferences.

David Sacks, a writer for "Third Rock From the Sun," had been in television for three years before he became observant. It nearly cost him a job, and "my then-agent told me that I wasn't going to work in television again," he says.

David Weiss, negotiating for a staff position on "Cybill," faced a nervous time when he revealed late in the game that the Sabbath was going to be an issue.

Weiss's cheerful assurance that "I can work Christmas, Easter and the Super Bowl" didn't sit well with his producers, who had been up front from the beginning about the heavy workload on Saturday.

For both Weiss and Sacks, the difficulties were eventually smoothed over, thanks, in part, to sympathetic writing partners able to take up the slack in their absence. Weiss and Sacks happily accepted lower salaries and lesser titles in return for the privilege of sticking to their religious convictions.

Both believe that their day of rest makes them better, more productive writers.

Says Weiss, "They got more out of me than they would have gotten out of someone who didn't take Shabbos off, because my

neshuma (soul) was refreshed." To some Orthodox Jews, the question of scheduling makes some Hollywood jobs more feasible than others.

Shimon Wincelberg, whose long list of credits includes "Gunsmoke" and "Naked City," as well as two groundbreaking segments of "Have Gun Will Travel" about a Chasidic Jew in the Old West, long ago bypassed opportunities to become a TV producer because "if the phone rang Friday night, I couldn't leave it unanswered."

On a movie set, it's virtually impossible to find an observant Jew sitting in the director's chair.

Writer-director Michael Tolkin, who takes Judaism seriously but is not Orthodox, explains that directing "is the circus master job. You've got to be there seven days a week."

But one Orthodox Jew is proving that he can also direct.

South African-born Ashley Lazarus is a highly regarded director of commercials who is now branching into dramatic productions for public television.

Lazarus' longtime producer, Laura Wallace-Rhodes, maintains that it's easy for Lazarus to remain observant because he's surrounded by key personnel who understand his religious requirements.

"You're talking to a Catholic," Wallace-Rhodes says. "I know exactly who I can order kosher food from and who I can't, throughout the world."

Because of the schedule restrictions and other religious differences, observant Jews haven't always been accorded the same treatment, particularly from non-observant Jews.

"I sometimes had difficulty with Jewish producers who resented [my religious practices]," Wincelberg says. "Dealing with gentile producers was a pleasure."

Hollywood Jews who have discovered orthodoxy sometimes struggle with the subject matter they're expected to handle. Writer Jeff Schechter once consulted his rabbi before adding curse words to his work.

Steinberg was able to serve as an informal religious expert on the movie "An American Tail": It was he who protested that Papa wouldn't play his fiddle on Rosh Hashanah.

And Sacks' knowledge of Jewish thought helped him land his current position on "Third Rock From the Sun," when the show's creators were wowed by his theological take on their premise.

Sacks is quick to thank Judaism for much of his creative success.

"Torah is so packed with insights about what it means to be human that when you tap into that reservoir, you can't help but draw from it for everything, from constructing stories to crossing the street," he says.

Torah and the mitzvot also provide a counterbalance to the daily craziness of Hollywood life. Orthodox Jews who work in Hollywood agree that, amid all the arrogance and attitude, Jewish observance is the best way to stay sane. □

## Israel to build on Golan

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli governmental committee voted to build 2,300 housing units in the Golan Heights.

In addition to these units, which will be built in the southern part of the Golan, the committee decided to build 2,500 vacation units there as well. □