



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 187

Thursday, October 22, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Netanyahu: 'We are not suckers'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu turned to the American Jewish community in an effort to build support for the Israeli position in the Middle East summit near Washington. In a call he initiated, Netanyahu told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and federation leaders from across the country, "We are not suckers," referring to what Netanyahu calls the Palestinians' inability to live up to basic commitments spelled out in peace accords. The call came during the seventh day of the summit, as the United States prepared to present a proposed text of an agreement to the two sides.

UIA Issues warning

The United Israel Appeal is warning that the American federation system could lose confidence in the Israeli government if it does not provide more than \$1 billion in compensation for public housing units to UIA and the Jewish Agency for Israel. [Page 3]

Reparations to be exempt

New Jersey residents who receive Holocaust reparations from Swiss banks will not have to pay state income tax on the funds. Gov. Christine Todd Whitman signed legislation that exempts the 4,485 Holocaust survivors and their heirs living in the Garden State.

Coalition circulates petition

A nationwide petition being circulated by the Christian Coalition calling for President Clinton's resignation or ouster because of the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal also calls on Congress to restore prayer to public schools. The petition also states that Congress "must begin the restoration of our country's moral fiber" by eliminating the marriage tax, banning so-called partial-birth abortions and allowing religious displays in government offices.

Germany to pursue slave issue

The incoming German government said it will set up a working group to find a solution to compensation for former World War II slave laborers. The announcement came after a meeting between chancellor-elect Gerhard Schroeder and industry executives. The meeting came one day after Schroeder said he would establish foundations for former slave workers and "forgotten Holocaust victims," such as homosexuals.

ELECTIONS '98

Pro-Israel PACs maintain pattern of contributions to candidates

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Democratic congressional candidates have received two-thirds of all contributions from pro-Israel political action committees in the 1998 election cycle, even though Republicans have the edge on special interest money across the board.

Democrats traditionally have been the recipients of most dollars flowing from pro-Israel interest groups.

Before the Republicans took over both houses of Congress in 1994, Democrats were taking in nearly \$3 for every \$1 the Republicans received.

The last election, however, saw the money begin to shift toward the Republican legislators for the first time since the Federal Election Commission made data available. In 1996, Republicans took in a record number of contributions, as pro-Israel PACs gave 60 percent of their outlays to Democrats and 40 percent to Republicans.

While some may have expected a tilting of the balance even further in favor of the Republicans, campaign finance experts predict that when reporting is completed, Democratic and Republican incumbents will have taken in roughly the same proportion of pro-Israel funding as they did two years ago.

The historic Democratic leanings of most pro-Israel givers have clearly had an impact on distributions.

But Democrats continue to maintain their edge because among incumbents who have been supportive of Israel, there are more Democrats than Republicans engaged in competitive election races this year — and therefore more Democrats are in need of PAC funding.

The overall level of campaign contributions from pro-Israel PACs, meanwhile, has remained consistent over the last few election cycles after experiencing a sharp drop-off in the early part of the decade.

So far, 33 pro-Israel PACs, some of which also consider domestic issues when distributing their funds, have contributed \$1.9 million to congressional candidates with a few weeks to go before the election, according to an analysis of FEC data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics, a Washington-based, non-partisan organization that analyzes the role of money in politics.

Roughly the same number of PACs contributed about \$2.3 million to candidates for both the 1994 and 1996 elections.

Contributions from pro-Israel PACs ranked third among all ideological and single-issue PACs, which overall have given 60 percent of their funds to Republicans and 40 percent to Democrats.

Only leadership PACs and candidate committees, which are run by members of Congress and other political figures to distribute funds, have outpaced the fund-raising of pro-Israel PACs.

PAC contributions represent only a small part of Jewish political giving. Millions more flow from individuals and other channels directly to candidates and political parties.

But PACs remain the only reliable way to track where Jews are giving their money.

The bulk of Jewish campaign contributions and campaign contributions as a whole comes in the form of "soft money" — unregulated contributions that go directly to the parties. Although there is no easy way of tracking what comes in and where it goes,

MIDEAST FOCUS

No-confidence bill submitted

Israelis opposed to a peace deal began protesting an apparent agreement being worked out at the Middle East summit near Washington.

The far-right Molechet Party submitted a motion of no-confidence in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Meanwhile, dozens of Jewish settlers tried to block several roads in the West Bank.

FBI may seek extraditions

The FBI may begin seeking the extradition of Palestinians suspected of murdering American citizens to the United States. After Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat refused Israeli requests for extradition, Jewish groups and some victims' family members began calling on the United States to prosecute the terrorists.

But such an arrangement is complicated by the lack of an extradition agreement between the Palestinian self-rule government and the United States.

Two terrorists sentenced

An Israeli military court sentenced two Hamas terrorists to five life sentences plus 20 years in prison for their involvement in the murder of 11 Israelis.

During the hearing, Abdel Raham Gheiniat and Jamal Alhour did not express any remorse for their actions. The two were members of a terrorist cell located near Hebron and planned the kidnapping and murder of Israeli soldier Sharon Edri and the Cafe Apropos bombing in Tel Aviv.

Coins unearthed during dig

Israeli archaeologists found a sixth-century jug filled with hundreds of gold coins at a site near Beit She'an.

An official with Israel's Antiquities Authority said the find would be turned over to the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem after the coins were cleaned and counted.



Daily News Bulletin

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JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.

Republican and Democratic party finance officials say that many of their major donors are Jews.

In addition, some PACs "bundle" together individual contributions and distribute them in lump sums — a practice that allows PACs to give an unlimited amount of money to a given candidate.

The National Jewish Democratic Council PAC, for example, has distributed more than half a million dollars to campaign coffers in this way, while the Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs has given out about \$200,000 in bundled and direct contributions.

The vast majority of contributions from those two multi-issue PACs, which also consider such issues as a candidate's stand on church-state matters and abortion rights, have gone to Democrats.

While the Democrats maintain an edge in pro-Israel PAC funding, most senior Republicans who have consistently supported Israel and who hold key leadership positions or committee chairmanships have been rewarded with solid financial support from the pro-Israel PACs.

But, spread across the entire field of Republican candidates, the level of support is far from comparable to what Democrat candidates enjoyed when they were in the majority.

The largest pro-Israel PAC, National PAC, has bucked the trend. Through Sept. 1 it had given about 60 percent of its \$267,000 in outlays to Republicans and 40 percent to Democrats.

Chuck Brooks, NATPAC's executive director and treasurer, said his committee's contributions are consistent with the makeup of Congress.

There are more Republican than Democratic senators and representatives currently holding seats on the appropriations committees and other important congressional panels.

Brooks said the overall bent among pro-Israel PACs toward Democrats can be attributed in part to the fact that "our community is still heavily Democratic, and a lot of people still don't have the ability to be bipartisan."

There is, however, some anecdotal evidence of increased support for Republicans in current campaigns.

Morris Amitay, founder and treasurer of the pro-Israel Washington PAC, said the Clinton administration's pressure tactics toward Israel earlier in the year in trying to advance the Middle East peace process have given Republican candidates the opportunity to voice unequivocal support for Israel.

"People are looking to those Republicans who have been more outspoken on behalf of Israel," said Amitay, whose committee had distributed \$122,400 through Sept. 1, the majority of it to Democrats.

The contributions from the pro-Israel PACs are finding their way into several tight races across the country, as well as a handful of secure contests that involve congressional leaders of both parties with records showing solid support for Israel.

Among the leading recipients, the funds are more or less evenly distributed between Jewish and non-Jewish members of Congress.

According to FEC statistics through last month, the top recipient of pro-Israel PAC funding in the Senate has been Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), taking in more than \$137,000, followed by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and Harry Reid (D-Nev.), all of whom have received more than \$60,000.

In the House, Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) has led the way with \$15,500, followed by Reps. Steven Rothman (D-N.J.), Howard Berman (D-Calif.), Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), and Reps. David Obey (D-Wisc.) and Sander Levin (D-Mich.), all of whom have received upwards of \$10,000.

PACs can donate a maximum of \$5,000 to each congressional candidate for the primaries and a maximum of \$5,000 for a general election, for a total of \$10,000 per election cycle.

Most PACs generally favor incumbents with a proven record on their issues, and only occasionally fund challengers. □

JEWISH WORLD

Jewish cemetery desecrated

Vandals destroyed 74 graves in a Jewish cemetery in a Ukrainian town 250 miles southeast of Kiev.

Vadim Rabinovich, the president of the All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress, an umbrella group, said in a statement that his group was "deeply concerned that such acts of vandalism are becoming more frequent."

Ukraine's Jewish leaders urged authorities in the former Soviet republic to investigate and prosecute those responsible for this incident, which occurred in the town of Chernovtsy, and other similar acts of anti-Semitism.

Archbishop issues invitation

The Jewish-born archbishop of France called upon Catholics to attend Holocaust Memorial Day services next year.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who converted to Catholicism during World War II, was in New York accepting an award from an interfaith group partly sponsored by Jews for his ecumenical work. Some Jewish leaders had opposed granting the award to the cardinal, who has said he considers himself a "fulfilled Jew."

Austrian bank plans payments

A small Austrian bank said it would pay out the remaining balance of accounts looted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

But the Oesterreichische Postsparkasse said it would not pay the full balance from the accounts, saying the funds had never been returned to the bank by the Nazis.

Meanwhile, two Austrian firms said they were investigating whether they had used slave labor during World War II.

The steel company VA Stahl AG and the engineering firm VA Technologie AG, following the lead of several other European companies, said they had hired historians to look into the matter.

Torah scrolls stolen

Thieves stole two Torahs from a New Jersey synagogue.

Anti-Semitism is not believed to be a motive in the theft of the scrolls and the silver and gold Torah ornaments, worth \$100,000.

'Life Is Beautiful' to appear

An Italian tragicomedy about the Holocaust opens this weekend in New York, Los Angeles and Israel.

"Life Is Beautiful," which is directed by its star, Roberto Benigni, has already won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

Jewish groups press Israel on compensation for housing

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The United Israel Appeal is warning that the American federation system could lose confidence in the Israeli government if it does not provide more than \$1 billion in compensation to UIA and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

At issue is whether the government will provide up to \$1.2 billion in compensation to the two organizations for public housing units they own that will be sold off at big discounts under a new law.

Without compensation, said Jeff Kaye, director of the UIA's Israel office, the organizations could face serious problems because the housing units form part of the collateral for extensive bank loans they have taken out.

A sudden sharp depreciation on their balance sheets could lead the banks to refuse to grant additional credit.

Kaye said this would damage the ability of UIA and the Jewish Agency to "do our job" and would "potentially upset existing confidence" of federations in the Israeli government.

The UIA serves as the funding link between the U.S. federation system and the Jewish Agency.

The agency provides humanitarian services in the Jewish state, such as immigrant resettlement.

On Monday, the Knesset passed a bill introduced by the opposition to sell as many as 120,000 low-cost public housing units to their tenants at substantial discounts of between 35 percent and 85 percent of market value.

The bill — opposed by the governing coalition — aims to help immigrants and poorer segments of society who have rented low-cost public housing units for more than five years to become homeowners.

UIA and the agency own 11,000 and 8,500 of these housing units, respectively, through an agency-owned company called Amigour.

They bought the housing units during the past 30 years at times when there was a need to provide low-rent housing for new immigrants to the Jewish state and the disadvantage.

Earlier this year, when the opposition began drafting the legislation, UIA and agency officials insisted on compensation that would total the difference between the market value and the discounted sale value of the property.

"We told Knesset members that we have no problem with getting out of public housing if the Knesset decides," said Kaye.

"But you can't give away our property without compensating us," the director added.

After the two organizations lobbied for it, the new law includes a clause on compensation, based on an existing law on government compensation for property confiscated for public works projects such as highways.

However, the details and procedures for valuating the property have yet to be set, and UIA and agency officials expect the government to invite them for talks within weeks.

Government officials have said the value of compensation could total 4 billion shekels — roughly \$950 million at current exchange rates.

That leaves a \$250 million gap, based on the \$1.2 billion the two organizations are seeking.

The total value of compensation will in part depend on how many tenants decide to buy the homes they now rent.

The government, which is trying to keep spending down, said it will be hard pressed to find the money.

Eli Yosef, a Finance Ministry spokesman, said the ministry has not yet discussed the matter.

"We know that the law is the law," he added. "But we will have a problem fitting this into the budget." □

Israelis and Italians expand pool of bone marrow transplant donors

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — A team of Israeli and Italian researchers has developed a technique that expands the donor pool for leukemia patients in need of bone marrow transplants.

The method, developed by scientists at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel and Perugia University in Italy for obtaining and treating bone marrow, eliminates the need to find a close donor-recipient match.

Leukemia — a group of cancer-like diseases of the blood cells affecting bone marrow and blood-forming tissues and organs — is generally treated with strong chemical and radiation therapies. Bone marrow transplantation, a painful procedure with a limited survival rate, is considered a last resort for terminal cases.

Until now, patients eligible for the radical therapy required a donor whose immune system matched theirs for six genetic markers — three from the father and three from the mother — to avoid rejection and other complications.

These restrictions meant that patients had to find matching donors among their siblings or among the general population, which is even rarer. Global registries have increased the odds of finding a match, but Jews and members of some other ethnic groups often have a difficult time finding suitable matches among the databases' millions of names.

Since most patients have relatives who do not match on all six of the markers but who can serve as bone marrow donors using the new technique, "advances in this area will greatly increase the availability of transplants as curative therapy," professors Yair Reisner of the Weizmann Institute and Massimo Martelli of Perugia University conclude in the Oct. 22 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

As a result of their work, patients can receive bone marrow transplants from donors matched along only three immunological markers, a partial match shared by parents and children.

Between siblings, there is a 75 percent chance of finding the vital correlation — and finding a partially compatible donor is also possible among extended family members, according to the Weizmann Institute.

Reisner sees big advantages with "mismatched" bone marrow transplants.

"When you don't have a donor, we can offer you something. You're not lost," he said in a telephone interview from Tel Aviv.

And for those waiting to locate a donor through a registry, he said, "we should be able to offer a solution immediately."

Bone marrow from unmatched donors carries the danger of triggering residual immunity in the recipient's blood that may reject the "foreign" marrow. In other cases, the transplanted marrow works against its host in a reverse-rejection.

The Reisner-Martelli method attempts to overcome this problem through "megadoses" of donated stem cells, which are obtained by injecting the donor with special hormones and then collected. Those cells are "cleaned" of their immune-system agents, giving them a decent chance of being accepted.

The new technique is already being implemented in hospitals in Israel, the United States, Germany and Austria.

Martelli and Reisner, whose collaboration dates to 1985, tracked the progress of 43 patients with acute forms of leukemia

who received unmatched transplants between 1995 and 1997.

At the study's end, the Israeli-Italian team reported results comparable to the outcomes from perfectly matched transplants.

Sixteen of the patients — none of whom had responded to other therapies — were free of the disease. The remaining patients had either relapsed or had died.

"It's not a home run," said Claudio Anasetti, the director of the Unrelated Donor Marrow Transplant Program at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, one of the world's foremost facilities. "But it's a big step towards how to get a transplant without too much toxicity." □

AJCommittee gives Czechs an 'F' in education on Jews

By Richard Allen Greene

PRAGUE (JTA) — Education about Jews and Judaism is severely lacking in Czech schools, according to a new American Jewish Committee study.

"Very few textbooks include even basic information about Jews," said the report's author, Leo Pavlat.

Pavlat, the director of the Jewish Museum in Prague, reviewed more than 90 history, literature, civics and geography textbooks for the study, "The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Czech Schools," which was released this week.

All of the textbooks were published since the 1989 collapse of communism.

Because the Czech Jewish community is so small — numbering around 6,000 in a country of more than 10 million — few Czechs have any significant contact with Jews, Pavlat said. This fact means that schools are "of crucial importance" for teaching Czechs about Jews, according to the report.

"Unfortunately, most of the materials in use — standards, curricula, and textbooks — are inadequate with regard to coverage of the Jewish experience," the report said.

When books do mention Jews or Judaism, the religion is often considered only a precursor of Christianity instead of a contemporary faith, Pavlat said.

And discussions of anti-Semitism are often absent even when textbooks have sections on racism and xenophobia, he continued.

David Singer, director of research for the AJCommittee, said the report should worry everyone — not just Jews.

"The way in which a society treats Jews is a barometer for the general levels of tolerance in that society," he said.

The report is part of an ongoing AJCommittee project to study the treatment of Jewish themes in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe.

The Czech Republic fares reasonably well in comparison to other countries in the region. The AJCommittee had found anti-Jewish statements in Slovak textbooks.

But Poland is "more problematic," Singer said.

"Polish materials pay more attention to Jewish issues" than Czech texts, "but certain negative perceptions of Jews that are part of Polish culture do exist in textbooks," he said.

Otakar Funda, who specializes in teaching about religion at the Charles University Pedagogical Faculty in Prague, agreed that the system lacked information about Judaism.

But he added that religion in general is underrepresented in schools. □