



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Netanyahu: Timetable delayed

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the timetable for implementing the Wye agreement would be delayed until the Palestinian Authority proves that it is fighting terrorism. He said last Friday's terrorist attack in Jerusalem, in which 21 people were wounded by a suicide car bombing, was proof that terrorist infrastructures continued to operate within the Palestinian self-rule areas.

### Court sidesteps voucher issue

The U.S. Supreme Court left intact Wisconsin's controversial school voucher program, which provides tuition vouchers for low-income students to attend the private or parochial school of their choice. Both sides of the voucher debate in the Jewish community had urged the court to rule on the issue, but the justices decided to sidestep it instead. Jewish voucher proponents claimed a "significant victory" in the court's action, while opponents said at least they had "lived to fight another day."

### Hamas official released

The Palestinian Authority released a senior Hamas leader from prison, according to an official with the militant group. The release of Mahmoud Zahar, a spokesman for Hamas in the Gaza Strip, came after several other leading militants were released in recent days, the official said. He added that there were some 250 other activists still imprisoned in the wake of a recent Palestinian crackdown.

### Germany marks Kristallnacht

Germany's chancellor and president were among the country's top officials attending one of hundreds of ceremonies in the country marking the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht. The leader of Germany's Jewish community warned that with the return of the German government next year to Berlin some Germans might seek a future unburdened by guilt for the Holocaust.

### Lileikis trial postponed again

The war crimes trial in Lithuania of a former U.S. citizen was postponed, for the fifth time this year, until the defendant is well enough to appear in court. Aleksandras Lileikis, a top official with the Lithuanian security police during the war, is suspected of having handed over scores of Jews to the Nazis.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Holocaust survivors bemoan D'Amato's impending departure

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — No one was more saddened than Estelle Sapir to see Alfonse D'Amato lose his Senate seat.

The 73-year-old Holocaust survivor credits the New York Republican with helping her attain a measure of justice that eluded her all her life.

"I almost gave up after so many years," Sapir, who lives in Queens, N.Y., said of her efforts following World War II to retrieve money her father had set aside for her in a Swiss bank account.

"Nobody helped me, and he was the one," said Sapir, who was featured in one of D'Amato's television campaign ads.

For most of those who struggled with D'Amato during the past three years to force Switzerland into providing a moral and financial accounting of its wartime past, his defeat came as a profound disappointment — not because they fear his successor, Charles Schumer, a Jewish Democrat, won't be able to represent survivors and Jewish interests as effectively as D'Amato.

They simply hated to see such a stalwart advocate for Jewish interests lose.

"D'Amato was a street fighter, and when he believed he had an issue he was right about, such as the Holocaust assets issue, he would fight for it, sometimes in very unconventional ways," said New York attorney Edward Fagan, who has represented survivors in various lawsuits aimed at resolving Holocaust-era claims.

"Once he got committed to something, God help you if you stood in his way."

The same brazen, cantankerous style of politicking that served as a ubiquitous thorn in the side of the Clinton administration on other issues for the better part of six years became a key element in the standoff with Swiss banks. D'Amato's tireless efforts, coupled with the work of Jewish groups, the Clinton administration and attorneys representing survivors, ultimately led to a \$1.25 billion settlement with Swiss banks in August, as well as a framework for pursuing a range of other questions surrounding Holocaust-era assets.

"It could not have been done without Senator D'Amato, and it could not have been done without President Clinton," Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said of the breakthroughs of the last few years. "One thing Senator D'Amato has after his loss," he added, "is this shining legacy of having changed history," of having "achieved a moral triumph that will distinguish his record."

In Switzerland, news of D'Amato's downfall was welcomed almost gleefully.

The Swiss government spokesman, in a comment laced with sarcasm, said, "The government has taken note of Mr. D'Amato's failure to win re-election, obviously with great regret."

For his part, Thomas Borer, the Swiss government's leading troubleshooter on Holocaust restitution issues, noted that some Swiss will be opening "a good bottle of wine," while the head of Switzerland's Jewish community, Rolf Bloch, added that "we will not turn down our flag as a sign of sorrow."

Daniel Goldstein, a columnist for the Swiss newspaper *Der Bund*, wrote: "We will miss you in Switzerland!" D'Amato, he said, "has almost become a slur — what irony that you would now, among other things, trip over an obscene Yiddish slur that you directed toward your Jewish opponent."

He was referring to the now infamous "putzhead" remark, which led to a storm of

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Settlers seeking footholds

Jewish settlers have set up at least five new encampments in the West Bank since last month's signing of the Wye agreement, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. The moves came as part of an effort to establish footholds in the West Bank before Israel embarks on any further redeployments.

### New bloc contemplated

Israeli right-wingers are meeting this week to discuss the creation of a new bloc opposed to making any territorial concessions to the Palestinian Authority.

Legislators from the Likud Party, National Religious Party, Tsomet, Moledet and non-parliamentary right-wing groups are among those attending the meetings.

### Barak visits Jordan

Israeli opposition leader Ehud Barak visited Jordan to meet with Crown Prince Hassan. The two discussed ways of implementing the Wye agreement.

### Report targets inequalities

Women working in Israel's civil service earn 25 percent less than their male counterparts, according to a survey presented to a Knesset member. The discrepancy is due largely to differences in how overtime benefits are allotted. The acting head of the civil service commission said one way to close the gap on overtime would be to force government offices to close at 5 p.m., a move that would eliminate the benefit for both men and women.

### Soil transported from Lebanon

United Nations officials said the Israeli army admitted that Israeli civilians had been transporting fertile top soil from southern Lebanon across the border into Israel's Galilee region. The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon said the Israeli army reported taking steps to stop the activity.



## Daily News Bulletin

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protest in the Jewish community and succeeded in wiping away whatever Jewish support D'Amato had gained through the Holocaust issue.

Indeed, after emerging as a leading advocate for Jews in the restitution battle, D'Amato received less Jewish support — 23 percent — than in his last election and about the same level as his first two Senate races.

The election, however, did not turn on Jewish issues. Nor did California's Senate race, where the Republican candidate, California Treasurer Matt Fong, also played an important role in pressuring Swiss banks to settle with Holocaust survivors by threatening sanctions earlier this year. Fong received 18 percent of the Jewish vote in his losing bid.

The failure of both candidates to capture much of the Jewish vote did not go unnoticed. Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said there is something of a truism in politics today: "If you help a constituency, that constituency usually remembers you."

But in the wake of D'Amato's defeat, he said, "You have to analyze whether people will say he was always there for the Jewish community, but the Jewish community in the end was not there for him."

To be sure, both D'Amato and Fong faced unique circumstances. Both were running against Jewish candidates with solid credentials and built-in appeal to Jewish voters, who have historically backed Democrats.

While the departure of D'Amato, who chairs the Senate Banking Committee, means that Jews and Holocaust survivors will be losing one of their leading advocates in the Senate, the fact remains that most of the Congress' work concerning Holocaust assets has been completed.

Schumer is expected to try to step in to fill the void and play whatever role he can to bring closure to the outstanding issues.

But the mantle now largely falls to a commission of U.S. public finance officers set up earlier this year to coordinate efforts concerning Swiss banks. That committee, headed by New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi, has now expanded its monitoring activities to include the whole range of unresolved Holocaust-era claims — most notably those stemming from unpaid insurance policies.

Still, as this final chapter of the Holocaust closes, D'Amato's work will not soon be forgotten.

In fact, D'Amato will be honored next week by the state of Israel at a special Knesset ceremony. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to present the Knesset's "Conscience and Courage" award to D'Amato, Hevesi, U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat and WJC President Edgar Bronfman for the role the four Americans played in helping achieve moral and material restitution for Holocaust survivors. □

## Cyprus arrests 2 Israelis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Two Israelis arrested in Cyprus on suspicion of spying were not working for Israel, officials in Nicosia said.

A statement released by the Justice Ministry in Cyprus said no proof had been found linking Israel to the two men, Udi Argov, 27, and Yigal Damari, 49.

The two were arrested Saturday after police raided the apartment they were staying in near the city of Larnaca.

Police confiscated photographic, communications and recording equipment from the apartment, located in a coastal village adjacent to a military installation. According to reports, the two are suspected of spying on Cypriot military operations.

A senior official in the Cypriot Embassy in Israel did not rule out the possibility that the two may have been gathering information on behalf of Turkey, which has occupied the northern third of Cyprus since a 1974 invasion.

The closer ties Israel has been forging with Turkey has been a source of concern in Cyprus.

The arrests came only days after Israeli President Ezer Weizman visited Cyprus, where he told Cypriot officials that Israel's ties with Ankara would not involve Cyprus, an island nation. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Action sought on compensation

Members of German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's ruling coalition urged him to speed up compensation for Nazi-era slave laborers.

The calls were timed to coincide with German ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of Kristallnacht. The commemorations were marred when a Berlin memorial to the mass deportation of the city's Jews was defaced with swastikas.

### Legislators call for prosecution

A Swiss parliamentary committee recommended that the leader of a far-right party should be prosecuted for calling earlier this year for a Swiss boycott of American and Jewish-made goods.

The committee also recommended that Rudolf Keller of the Swiss Democratic Party be stripped of his parliamentary immunity so that he can be tried on the charges.

Keller made his call after U.S. finance officials threatened a boycott of Swiss goods to increase pressure on Swiss banks to settle claims dating from the Nazi era.

### Family seeks haven in Fiji

A Jewish family is reportedly seeking refugee status in the Pacific island nation of Fiji. Yuri and Irina Yurovsky arrived in Fiji last December along with their two children.

After missing several deadlines to leave Fiji, they filed an injunction in the country's High Court seeking a stay of deportation. They claim that they were mistreated in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan and fear that their forcible return will result in persecution and possibly death.

### Holocaust book goes to schools

A 21-page booklet that challenges standard perceptions of British attitudes toward Jews and the Holocaust will be distributed in British schools.

The booklet, "Britain and the Holocaust," says that Britain's wartime leaders knew as early as 1941 about the scale of the Holocaust. Holocaust education is mandatory in British schools.

### Far-right issues bomb threat

A Swedish cathedral was evacuated after a far-right group phoned in a bomb threat during a commemoration of human rights.

After police failed to find any explosive devices, the approximately 100 attendees, which included Auschwitz survivors, were let back into the church in the southern city of Lund.

The church was hosting a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Reform movement to develop ethics curriculum for children

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK (JTA) — A year ago Rabbi Eric Yoffie, addressing some 4,000 Reform movement leaders gathered at their biennial conference, called for a new code of ethics to be developed and taught to children.

He said in his first address as president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that the Reform movement was failing to communicate clear moral guidance to its youth.

Hotels in downtown Toronto had been refusing to book Bar and Bat Mitzvah receptions unless the parents hired private security guards, he pointed out. The reason? Kids attending these Reform celebrations were destroying the premises.

The situation has not changed much, but the Reform movement has begun to respond to Yoffie's call.

"There's an ethical crisis in our society. Jews are an integral part of that society and we have not escaped all of those difficult ethical issues," Yoffie said in a recent interview. "It is a particularly difficult situation for many of our kids."

"Jewish tradition has strong things to say about what's ethically right and wrong," he said.

"We have a firm obligation through our camps, Israel programs, youth groups and religious schools to provide guidance for studying what Judaism has to say and to make appropriate ethical decisions."

Soon after last year's conference, Yoffie called together the three UAHC professionals who head the youth group, education and programming departments, respectively, asking that they compose a curriculum about Jewish ethics to be implemented in the movement's camps and teen groups.

They decided to expand the project by creating a task force on Jewish ethics — and someone pointed out that without involving parents, trying to teach ethics to kids won't get very far.

A pair of teens was caught engaging in oral sex at one of the Reform movement's 10 overnight camps last summer, said Rabbi Jan Katzew, director of the department of education, by way of example.

The teens, echoing President Clinton, said oral sex didn't count as sex. And some of their parents agreed, Katzew said. The children were expelled from the camp nonetheless.

With its mandate broadened, members of the task force — 85 young adult leaders of high school and college youth groups, Reform educators, rabbis and lay people — gathered in the UAHC's offices on Monday for the first of three full-day meetings.

The kickoff examined the theoretical foundations of moral philosophy. The other meetings — one in January and one in March — will be devoted to the bases of moral psychology and moral education.

At each symposium two scholars will present a paper; four working groups will then break off to develop plans of action.

Each working group is devoted to dealing with a different age group, from early childhood to adulthood.

The reality, particularly in settings like camps and youth groups, is that the people most directly supervising participants are often older teen-agers themselves, Yoffie said.

"We have a lot of people making decisions for which they're not at all prepared," said Katzew.

"We have to think not just about [lessons from Jewish] text, but about the context we're working in."

It has to begin with "identifying what constitutes a moral dilemma. There's not even universal agreement on that," he said.

The task force expects to develop programs for teacher and counselor training, and programs for use with kids and adults themselves, by the summer of 2000, Katzew said.

"We have a long way to go," he said.

The Reform movement has some 875 congregations, which have about 1.5 million members. □

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES****Israel's modern Orthodox begin to re-examine role of movement***By Avi Machlis*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Modern Orthodox leaders in Israel are trying to launch a movement to build bridges across the widening religious-secular gulf.

Some 200 Israeli rabbis, academics and activists gathered last month at Kibbutz Lavi in the Galilee to rethink the role of religious Zionism and modern Orthodoxy in Israel.

It has been 23 years since a similar conference was held. Although the organizers of the recent meeting said it was apolitical, they appeared to have been motivated by several trends affecting the modern Orthodox movement:

- the shift by the National Religious Party, the religious Zionist party, from a moderating political force to one of the most steadfast opponents of land-for-peace deals with the Palestinians;
- fervently Orthodox groups gaining political power while successfully luring many secular Jews and modern Orthodox toward Jewish fundamentalism;
- the increasing permissiveness of Israeli secular culture, which makes it much more difficult to reconcile orthodoxy and modernity, and is also persuading many young people to remove their yarmulkas.

Organizers insisted the convention was intended to promote unity on social and religious issues among the modern Orthodox, who make up about 10 percent of Israel's Jewish population. Pessimistic participants, however, fear the gathering, which wrestled with such issues as the role of women in Orthodox Jewish life, may actually further divide the community.

While politics were not on the agenda, organizers acknowledged that more participants were supporters of Meimad, the small, center-left modern Orthodox movement which supports trading land for peace with the Palestinians, than the NRP, the political backbone of West Bank settlers.

In its early years, the NRP was a moderate political force that often formed alliances with Labor-led governments. Its transformation during the past 20 years, say experts, has weakened its influence as a moderating force on social and religious issues.

There are few moderate Orthodox members in the current Knesset, while there are some 14 fervently Orthodox Knesset members. Meanwhile, the NRP's nine are almost exclusively focused on holding back the peace process.

Rabbi Yehuda Amital, head of the Gush Etzion Yeshiva and a Meimad founder, chose to discuss politics in his address opening the conference, despite the organizers' intentions. He lashed out at the use of halachah, or Jewish law, to justify political goals, such as opposition to the Oslo peace accords.

"It doesn't take a lot of imagination to think what may happen in a young person's mind when these beliefs are shaken," he said, referring to the transfer of West Bank land to Palestinian rule.

"In the eyes of the younger generation, the halachah in its entirety has become something that has no connection with reality," said Amital, who was a minister without portfolio in the previous government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres. "Halachah has turned into something autistic — completely detached from the real world."

The transformation of halachah into "dangerous slogans" that fail to emphasize traditional Judaic values, said Amital, has created a severe crisis of faith among religious youth.

Nevertheless, the Lavi talks remained focused on social and religious issues, and after three days of discussions participants agreed that:

- Orthodox-secular relations must undergo a fundamental change aimed at forging unity instead of trying to attract secular Jews to orthodoxy.
- Orthodox rabbinic leaders must complement their training with a broader education and deal with social issues such as domestic violence and socioeconomic disparities.
- Orthodox solutions must be found to reconcile the changing role of women in the modern world.

According to Menachem Friedman, sociology professor at Bar-Ilan University and an expert on Israeli orthodoxy who attended the convention, the push by women to attain a larger role in Jewish life will make it virtually impossible to promote unity within Israel's modern Orthodox community.

"Forget about it," he said. "The minute women study Torah, you cannot stop the process. In the end, like it or not, some communities will grant a bigger role to women in prayer and religious leadership. This will cause an explosion, and other elements will use this as a reason to divide the community."

Although not all religious rightists in Israel are extreme in their Orthodoxy, Friedman said "statistical proof" exists showing a correlation in right-wing religious political views and religious extremism. He rejects the view of many conference participants who hoped the gathering would be a milestone for raising the moderate Orthodox flag in Israel.

"Unfortunately, I think that the social and political trends are pushing in the opposite direction — towards more extremism," he said.

But Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Israel office and a conference organizer, said the Lavi gathering will produce concrete results.

"This is not only talk," he insisted. "We all had the feeling that unless there are practical results we have not done anything innovative here."

Zuroff said a steering committee has been established, including representatives of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the religious kibbutz movement and Yeshiva University alumni in Israel.

"We can be a role model," Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, who attended part of the conference, said in a telephone interview. "This in many ways is a founding session that will launch it [modern Orthodoxy] as an identifiable group in Israel."

Lamm said Israeli modern orthodoxy differs from the American version, since in Israel modern orthodoxy has been politicized and also "confined" primarily to intellectuals. "In America it's a more popular movement and only in the past few years have we begun to mobilize the intellectuals."

Lamm said his university wants to share its experiences with the Israeli group of building the Orthodox Forum and the Orthodox Caucus, a modern Orthodox think tank and action group established over the past five years in the United States. Zuroff said the Israeli steering committee is "seriously considering" setting up similar institutions as quickly as possible. □