



# Daily News Bulletin

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81<sup>st</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Communist assails Zionism

The leader of Russia's Communist Party declared in a manifesto that the "spread of Zionism" in Russia is "one of the reasons for the current catastrophic condition of the country."

At the same time, Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of Russia's largest party, said he condemns anti-Semitism.

Meanwhile, U.N. Watch, an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress, called on the U.N. high commissioner for human rights to denounce members of Russia's Communist Party who recently made anti-Semitic statements. [Page 3]

### Chase named in Holocaust suit

Chase Manhattan Bank helped the Nazis plunder millions of dollars from Holocaust victims, according to a class-action lawsuit filed in Brooklyn.

The bank "collaborated with the German authorities" during the war, the suit alleges.

The lawsuit makes similar accusations against investment house J.P. Morgan and seven French banks.

### Ex-army chief leaves military

Israel's former army chief of staff left the military, a move that will enable him to run against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is favored to beat the premier in Israel's upcoming election, according to recent polls.

### Group says it bombed grave

A group claimed responsibility for bombing the grave of the former leader of Germany's Jewish community, Berlin police said.

The group said in a letter to police that it had carried out the bombing to protest the recent naming of a Berlin street for Heinz Galinski, the community's leader from 1988 until his death in 1992.

Berlin officials, who are investigating the authenticity of the letter, offered a \$12,000 reward for information leading to the bombers' arrest.

**REMINDER:** The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Dec. 28

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Jewish groups are debating who should get Swiss funds

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Four months after Swiss banks agreed to pay a whopping \$1.25 billion to settle Holocaust-era claims, Jewish groups and attorneys are still debating who should get the money and how to distribute it.

Jewish organizations and lawyers who represented Holocaust survivors in a class-action lawsuit against the banks agree the bulk of the funds should be turned over directly to Holocaust survivors.

But there is a divergence of opinion about whether any portion of the fund should be diverted for other purposes — either for attorney's fees or for institutions or programs dedicated to Holocaust education and remembrance.

It is a question on which Jewish organizations, Holocaust survivors and their attorneys all intend to have a say.

At the same time, the key players have sought to dispel any notion that there is some sort of unseemly scramble for money taking place, as some news reports have suggested.

Most disparaged a recent front-page New York Times story that ran under the headline "Jewish Groups Fight for Spoils of Swiss Case."

In fact, all decisions about distribution of the fund reside with U.S. District Court Judge Edward Korman, who is the ultimate authority on the settlement.

The issue is likely to come into sharper focus when the settlement agreement is finalized.

At that point, Korman will appoint an outside attorney as a special master to review competing distribution proposals and make a recommendation.

Those involved in the case asked Korman to appoint the special master in hopes of avoiding a long legal skirmish over the issue.

Sources say that Judah Gribetz, a longtime Jewish activist who previously served as president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York and is currently the president of the Hebrew Free Loan Society, is expected to be tapped for the position.

Various proposals for distribution will be submitted to the court after the special master is appointed, most likely early next month.

The World Jewish Restitution Organization — an umbrella body of groups representing much of the organized Jewish community, Holocaust survivors and the State of Israel — has been developing a proposal to give the bulk of the fund to Holocaust survivors.

But the plan would retain some of the money for institutions and programs that benefit survivors and Holocaust remembrance.

The plan calls for first paying those with identified Swiss bank accounts. Those assets are estimated to total only about \$200 million.

The remaining billion or so would go to Holocaust survivors — 55 percent as cash payments, 25 percent for medical and social services, and 20 percent for Holocaust education, research, and various social and cultural projects.

The idea of diverting money for programs or institutions troubles at least one attorney involved in the case.

"Tell that to all the hundreds of thousands of destitute survivors to whom an extra hundred dollars would be very meaningful," said Edward Fagan, a New York lawyer

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Premier: I'll lead Likud in election

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he is confident he will defeat any potential rivals seeking to take over the Likud Party leadership and run for the premiership in the upcoming election.

Netanyahu's comment came as Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert met with senior Likud officials to consider mounting such a challenge. The Likud leadership decided earlier this week that party primaries will be held Jan. 25, contrary to Netanyahu's preference for an earlier date.

### Israel protests Yassin's release

Israel accused the Palestinian Authority of acting in bad faith when it freed Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin from house arrest earlier this week. Palestinian officials conduct a "high-profile policy of ostensibly taking actions against Hamas," a government spokesman said.

But the release of Yassin proves that the Palestinian Authority is "quietly acquiescing to Hamas activities," he added. After his release, Yassin told followers his militant movement had triumphed over attempted Israeli-Palestinian peace moves in the Wye accord, which he described as a failure.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority is considering the release of some 300 Hamas detainees, according to Israeli media reports. Israeli officials are said to be concerned that the self-rule government may also free 20 terror suspects arrested under the terms of the Wye accord. The halt in the accord's implementation may prompt the Palestinians to halt all security cooperation with Israel, the officials warned.

### Former model creates new party

A former Israeli fashion model formed a new centrist political party to run in Israel's upcoming elections. Pnina Rosenblum, who named the party after herself, said she wants to focus on "internal problems" facing the country.

who believes that survivors should be the only ones making decisions about distribution.

For his part, Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, said he would support giving a portion of the money to institutions that preserve Holocaust memory, provided that "the survivors sign off on it."

Others have proposed distributing the bulk of the fund to Israel, similar to the way the German reparations program was handled after World War II.

"Israel is the inheritor state of those who left no inheritors," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, pointing out that more Holocaust survivors live in Israel than anywhere else.

The issue of attorneys fees is another source of contention that the court will ultimately decide.

Only a few of the two dozen or so lawyers who worked on the case intend to apply to the court for fees.

Early in the process, an executive committee set up by the lawyers urged everyone to work pro bono on the case.

But for those who could not afford to, the committee agreed that fees should be modest and only cover work that actually advanced the case.

Most Jewish officials, however, have said they believe it is wholly inappropriate for lawyers to seek fees.

"Nobody should be profiting from the Holocaust," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Steinberg added, "We have had many offers from lawyers who are willing to do this pro bono."

Foxman said it would be preferable for lawyers to work pro bono, lest restitution efforts "become a vehicle for ambulance chasing."

Fagan, who has played one of the more visible and controversial roles in working on the Swiss case and other compensation claims, said asking attorneys not to seek fees is "contrary to every tenet of the American justice system."

"If lawyers don't have the chance to apply for fees, then it has a chilling effect" on efforts to litigate and resolve other cases, he said.

Sources involved in the settlement said they expect the judge to ultimately award roughly \$2 million to \$3 million in fees among a handful of lawyers, amounting to only a few months' interest on the \$1.25 billion total.

Some lawyers now pursuing the so-called "second-generation" of cases — which include efforts to seek compensation from other European banks and insurers, as well as companies that profited from slave labor during World War II — have since reassessed the fee issue.

Mel Weiss, a lead attorney in the Swiss bank case who decided at the outset to work pro bono, said his law firm will likely put in for fees in other cases it is now handling.

"We realized we couldn't keep doing it pro bono," Weiss said. "We just don't have the resources.

"It's too big a burden for our firm."

Another concern will be assuring that the money can be distributed as quickly as possible.

The fact that it is a court settlement, however, imposes certain constraints on the process.

It is expected to take another six to nine months to complete the process of establishing a settlement plan and holding public hearings, after which Holocaust survivors can begin to apply for payments.

Steinberg of the WJC said the processes might have been speeded up, but that since the American government "supported a court settlement, that's the road that has to be taken."

Still, most advocates for Holocaust survivors stress that bureaucratic entanglements should be avoided so that aging survivors can be assured of cash payments within their lifetime.

It would be a "great tragedy," Hier of the Wiesenthal Center said, if "the Swiss were quicker to pay than the Jewish organizations were to distribute." □

## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### E.U. may deny funds to Israel

The European Union may deny Israel millions of dollars in research funds to protest what it says is the Jewish state's refusal to implement the Wye accord. A final decision by E.U. officials on whether to exclude Israel for the next four years from its research and development program is expected to come in mid-January.

### Court rules against 'Mein Kampf'

A Swedish court banned publication of a Swedish-language version of Hitler's "Mein Kampf." After World War II, the Allies gave Bavaria publication rights for Hitler's works.

The German state has opposed publication of Hitler's manifesto in order to prevent the spread of racist thinking.

The Swedish publisher who wants to print the book, reportedly not a right-wing extremist, says he will continue his legal battle.

### Wartime exhibit prompts scuffles

Scuffles broke out between German rightists and leftists at an exhibit about the role of ordinary German soldiers in the Holocaust.

The exhibit in the northwestern city of Hanover has been traveling to cities in Germany and Austria for the past three years.

It uses photographs and documents to prove that German soldiers aided the Nazi SS in killing Jews and other civilians during World War II.

### Church honors Rabin's memory

A church near Florence held a concert promoting Middle East peace and honoring the memory of slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin.

Rabin's widow, Leah, was the guest of honor at the concert.

### Holocaust memorial dedicated

A memorial to victims of the Holocaust and other genocides was dedicated recently in Albuquerque, N.M., despite vociferous objections by some survivors and Jewish community members to the memorial's design and location.

Plans are currently under way for a Holocaust museum and study center to open in the city by the year 2000.

### Jewish rescuer dies at 92

A man credited with rescuing thousands of Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe died in Maryland at 92. William Perl was known as the "Moses of the Holocaust" after organizing a rescue effort that brought some 40,000 Jews to Palestine during the late 1930s and 1940s.

## Russian Communists shift aim of attack from Jews to Zionists

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Fanning the already smoldering flames of anti-Semitism in Russia, the leader of Russia's Communist Party has declared in a manifesto that the "spread of Zionism" is "one of the reasons for the current catastrophic condition of the country."

But at the same time, Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of Russia's largest party, condemned anti-Semitism, drawing a distinction between Jews and Zionism, which he called "a blood relative of fascism."

The manifesto was released in response to a request from President Boris Yeltsin's administration and the Russian Justice Ministry, which wanted to clarify the Communist Party's position on anti-Semitism.

But the document's release has only heightened concern about anti-Semitism in Russia and increased international condemnation over the issue.

Indeed, U.N. Watch, an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress, called on the U.N. high commissioner for human rights to denounce all members of Russia's Communist Party who made anti-Semitic statements. And Jewish leaders in Russia expressed their outrage at the document.

The document's release is the latest in a series of anti-Semitic developments that have plagued Russia since the economy began to deteriorate sharply earlier this year — along with Yeltsin's health.

Two Communist lawmakers, Albert Makashov and Viktor Ilyukhin, made several anti-Semitic remarks in public; a lawmaker known for her support of Jewish causes was assassinated; and anti-Semitic literature and graffiti appeared in at least two Russian cities.

In a move underlining the seriousness with which the government takes these incidents, Yeltsin's chief of staff convened a meeting of top security and defense officials last Monday to discuss the situation and the related problem of political extremism.

The manifesto released this week "declares anti-Semitism as the official policy of the Russian Communist Party," said Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt. "No one is going to question anymore what ideology this party represents," he said.

But despite the tone of the document, one Russian newspaper said the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism would likely reduce pressure emanating from Yeltsin's administration to crack down on the Communist Party.

A leading Moscow daily wrote that the Kremlin may not be fully satisfied with the way Zyuganov tried to quell the scandal over anti-Semitism. But Vremya-MN said that by making the distinction, Zyuganov reduced the possibility of federal authorities placing political and legal pressure on his party.

The manifesto did not make specific mention of the anti-Semitic remarks made by Makashov and Ilyukhin. Instead, Zyuganov equivocally referred to "hasty remarks by some Communists that run counter" to the party's position on the national question.

Zyuganov wrote that, according to his party, Jews in Russia have three options: leave the country, live in Russia as members of the Jewish community while considering Russia as their "only motherland" or assimilate into the ethnic Russian population or any other ethnicity living in Russia.

During the years of Soviet rule, authorities often drew the same distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism that Zyuganov made in the manifesto.

From the late 1940s on, the Soviet propaganda machine worked hard to spread the myth of a worldwide Zionist plot. The campaign was especially intense after 1967, when the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with Israel. Recent opinion surveys showed that the majority of Russians do not have an understanding of Zionism. The manifesto was issued shortly after the Kremlin vowed to crack down on anti-Semitism and political extremism. On Monday, representatives from the Main Military Inspectorate and the Security Council were sent to several Russian regions to check whether this crackdown is being followed. □

## 'The Prince of Egypt' portrays Moses' life in film for whole family

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — After four years of intense preparation and months of drum-beating, "The Prince of Egypt" opened last week at theaters across the United States.

Based loosely on the first part of the Book of Exodus, the animated musical film depicts the life of Moses before his 40 years of wandering in the desert.

The 90-minute film starts with a prologue where Moses' mother cradles the baby boy in a basket of bulrushes and floats him down the Nile to save him from Pharaoh's decree mandating the death of all newborn Hebrew male children.

The movie's epilogue shows Moses presenting the Ten Commandments at the foot of Mount Sinai to a vast multitude of followers.

In the main body of the film, Moses grows from young manhood in the Pharaoh's palace to the aged leader of his people, marshaling the exodus from Egypt and crossing the parted Red Sea, which closes over the pursuing Egyptians.

The film is a marvel of hand-drawn and computer-generated animation: 7 million locusts denude the countryside, the vaporous Angel of Death slays the Egyptian first-born, 16,000 Hebrews flee from Pharaoh, the Red Sea parts in a breathtaking four-minute sequence and 146,000 Israelites receive the Ten Commandments.

"The Prince of Egypt" may boggle purists for its depiction of a hip young Moses and his civil-libertarian declamations as he confronts Pharaoh.

But many others will enjoy the film as an exciting adventure tale, respectful enough of the original sources to have passed advance muster by a phalanx of Jewish, Muslim and Christian clergy and lay leaders.

No fewer than 15 Los Angeles and New York rabbis — Orthodox, Conservative and Reform — are listed as advisers to the filmmakers. According to selected interviews, all have pronounced the movie as fit for Jewish consumption.

Oscar-winning composer Stephen Schwartz wrote the score. Some songs are performed in Hebrew, including the fervent "Deliver Us," rendered by Israeli vocalist Ofra Haza, and the rousing "Ashira L'Adonai" (I Will Sing Unto the Lord), as the waves of the Red Sea close over Pharaoh's army.

Three Jewish principals — executive producer Jeffrey Katzenberg, who founded the DreamWorks studio with fellow moguls Steven Spielberg and David Geffen, and youthful producers Penney Finkelman Cox and Sandra Rabins — played key roles in creating the film.

From the beginning of the four-year process, "We decided that we would be faithful to the biblical narrative, but in those areas where the text was silent, we could be creative," explains Finkelman Cox.

"It is somewhat like the Midrash and other commentary, which evolved to fill in the gaps in the formal text."

Since Exodus reports nothing about Moses' adolescence, the film posits that he and the reigning Pharaoh's son, Ramses II, were raised in the palace as brothers — and rather mischievous brothers at that.

In one of the most spectacular sequences, the two young men

compete in a breakneck chariot race, which puts the average Hollywood car chase to shame.

The filmmakers also wanted to make certain that the movie would not be perceived as either a "kiddie cartoon" or a preachy sermon.

The Ten Plagues are depicted graphically, and the filmmakers are delighted that the movie received a "PG" rating, for parental guidance suggested.

As Rabins explains, "This is not a movie that parents can drop their kids off for the afternoon.

"Parents need to be prepared to answer some tough questions: Is God an angry God? Why does He allow slavery? Why does He kill? This is not a movie for toddlers."

What role did the producers' Jewish background play in their interpretation of the Moses story? In personal interviews, the question led to some intriguing answers.

"I am an entertainer and storyteller," says Katzenberg. "There are certainly other parts of my background that helped me tell the story.

"But how each of us embraces the faith aspect of his life is a very personal matter.

"I don't want people's reaction to this movie to be influenced by my personal faith."

In Hollywood, Katzenberg is known as a generous contributor to Jewish and other causes.

He is also reputed to be a legendary workaholic.

His daily schedule, it is reported, includes two breakfasts, one lunch and two dinners to meet with writers, agents and directors. A standing joke has it that he and his wife Marilyn, a Bronx-born former kindergarten teacher, had twins 15 years ago because that was more efficient than having one child at a time.

The film's two other guiding lights, Rabins and Finkelman Cox, met 16 years ago on the set of the Oscar-winning "Terms of Endearment."

They were shooting on the plains of Nebraska and when Passover time came, the two young women set up a huge table and invited the predominantly non-Jewish cast and crew to a real seder, led by the film's director, James Brooks.

During the first year of filming "The Prince of Egypt," when the staff was still relatively small, "We had a seder for 60 people, including the three directors and the entire crew," recalls Rabins. "Everybody came, though most had no idea about the meaning of the holiday."

The themes of Passover — freedom and deliverance — obviously affected the two producers' perception of how to shape "Prince of Egypt," while their research on the film augmented their understanding of the biblical story.

"The study and the reading we did for the movie certainly informs the holiday as it comes into my personal life each year, but I was not motivated to do this project because I wanted to tell a great Jewish story," says Finkelman Cox.

To the producers' credit, they decided early on that any gimmicky merchandise tie-ins, which sometimes bring in more profits than the box office, would demean the film's biblical roots and lofty themes.

Study guides and books for youngsters are accompanying the film. But, says Rabins, "There will be no burning bush night lights, no Red Sea shower curtains that split in the middle and no 40-days-in-the-desert water bottles." □