



# Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 3

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Knesset delays pluralism vote**

A Knesset committee postponed votes by the full Israeli legislature on a bill to block the appointment of Reform and Conservative representatives to local religious councils. The bill, which already passed the first of three Knesset votes, was initiated to counter a recent Supreme Court ruling ordering the appointment of non-Orthodox representatives to the councils.

In a related development, the chairman of the Knesset's Law Committee plans to ask the Supreme Court to postpone until after the national elections hearing an appeal of a lower court's ruling recognizing conversions performed by Conservative and Reform rabbis. [Page 1]

### **Israeli centrists to cooperate**

Two centrist contenders in Israel's race for prime minister announced their intent to cooperate. Knesset member Dan Meridor, who left the Likud Party to challenge Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and former army chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak acknowledged that they had not yet decided who would lead their centrist party.

### **U.S. super-primary to be moved?**

Two U.S. state officials are recommending that an eight-state presidential primary scheduled for Saturday, March 11, 2000, be rescheduled to avoid conflicting with the Jewish Sabbath. Utah Gov. Michael Leavitt and Montana Secretary of State Mike Cooney, who co-chair a task force for the primary, suggested it be held a day earlier.

### **Clinton meets with King Hussein**

President Clinton and Jordan's King Hussein discussed the Middle East peace process and the situation in Iraq during a meeting at the White House. Hussein visited Washington on his way home after six months of cancer treatment. Doctors pronounced him in good health when he was discharged from the Mayo Clinic last week.

### **Russian police to help Jews**

Russian authorities say they will help ensure the safety of Jewish sites in Moscow. In response to a request by the Russian Jewish Congress, Russian police will start providing special security measures this month for Jewish institutions in the Moscow area.

## **Reform, Conservative leaders step up religious pluralism drive**

*By Debra Nussbaum Cohen*

NEW YORK (JTA) — Leaders of the Reform and Conservative movements of Judaism are once again mobilizing their 3 million American followers to fight legislative moves to solidify the Orthodox monopoly over Jewish religious affairs in Israel.

Using rhetoric as sharp as a well-honed knife, leaders of the two movements exhorted their constituents at a news conference here Tuesday to mount a lobbying and media campaign to block the adoption of two bills currently under consideration by the Israeli Knesset.

One would cement sole Orthodox control over conversions to Judaism performed in Israel; the other would require all members of municipal Israeli religious councils to conform to Orthodox levels of ritual observance.

The legislative maneuvers are a reaction to recent court decisions that have for the first time given the Reform and Conservative movements a say over certain Jewish religious affairs in Israel.

The status of both bills is changing daily, with some forces pushing for speedy adoption to blunt the effect of the recent court rulings and other forces trying to put off the legislation until after the May 17 Israeli national elections.

Those politicians seeking a delay are concerned that the issue will have an impact on the elections and could open a gaping new rift in Israeli-Diaspora relations.

But the head of the Reform movement expressed frustration with continuing efforts to postpone the final conflict over recognizing the legitimacy of non-Orthodox movements in Israel.

"The time has come to bite the bullet on this issue," Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said at Tuesday's news conference. The Orthodox rabbinate in Israel "can't thumb their noses in the face of our Judaism and expect that we will not respond."

Similarly, Stephen Wolnek, president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, said, "If those in power in Israel wish to spit in our eye, they must expect there will be a reaction.

"Our tolerance and patience certainly has an end."

The Reform movement placed an advertisement on the op-ed page of The New York Times on Tuesday.

It read: "Religious fundamentalists in Israel are again threatening to redefine 'Who is a Jew?' We must not let them."

Adoption of the laws "will cause irreparable harm to the unity of the Jewish people," it warned.

Although the advertisement was placed only by the Reform movement, leaders of the Conservative movement said at the news conference that they too support what it says.

At the news conference Tuesday, both movements asked their constituents, who represent about 85 percent of synagogue-affiliated American Jews, to communicate their displeasure over the legislative efforts to Israeli lawmakers and those who can influence them.

Specifically, they urged their followers to:

- lobby members of Knesset with e-mails and phone calls;
- contact Israeli consulates, along with local Jewish and secular media;
- withhold money from "any person or organization that cannot state to your satisfaction that they support pluralism, and that they have respect for Reform and

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### State Dept. downplays Ross visit

The U.S. State Department downplayed expectations for next week's visit to Israel by U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross.

State Department spokesman James Rubin stressed at a news briefing that while Ross is expected to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, the primary purpose of his visit is to fulfill a commitment to speak at a peace institute named for former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

### Ban on new Israeli party urged

An Israeli legislator asked the head of the central election commission to disqualify the newly formed Israel, Our Home Party because the views expressed by its leader, are undemocratic.

The legislator said Avigdor Lieberman's views, set forth at a news conference this week, pose a danger to Israeli society.

Lieberman is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's former right-hand man.

### PLO speakers slam Israel

Speakers at recent rallies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip celebrating the 34th anniversary of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction denounced Israel for what they said was its suspension of the Wye accord.

Some demonstrators at the rallies marking the founding of Fatah, the main faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization, burned American and Israeli flags.

### Faulty spying blamed for attack

Faulty intelligence was to blame for a recent Israeli air attack in Lebanon that led to the deaths of a Lebanese woman and six of her seven children, according to an Israeli military inquiry.

Intelligence pictures of the site targeted by Israeli jets were outdated, according to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*.



## Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*  
 Mark J. Jaffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*  
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor (on leave)*  
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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](http://www.jta.org).  
 © JTA      Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

Conservative Judaism”;

• contact leaders of their local Jewish federations, which raise money in Jewish communities all over North America to support domestic and overseas needs, asking them “to caution Israeli policy-makers about the dangers of passage of any religious legislation.”

“It would be helpful if local federations were to come out with public statements” in favor of pluralism, said an “Action Alert” sent out to the leadership of every Reform congregation.

UJA Federations of North America, the new federation umbrella group, is taking a proactive role in the current round of the pluralism debate.

Last week it distributed a brief statement to its lay and professional leaders, saying that the organization “urges Israeli leadership and members of Knesset to oppose the bill” that would exclude non-Orthodox Jews from religious councils.

Federation leaders also sent a letter to about 40 members of Knesset last week asking them “to consider what impact the legislation might have between Israel and American Jewry,” said Jay Yoskowitz, executive vice president of the Council of Jewish Federations, one of the main constituents of the new umbrella group.

Those members of Knesset who got the letter, including some from the Orthodox political parties, visited American Jewish communities to see their federations at work in the last year, Yoskowitz said in an interview.

“We felt it was important to make a statement suggesting very strongly that nobody do anything that would affect how Jews relate to each other both here and in Israel,” he said.

In the past, federation leaders have voiced concern that the pluralism crisis would have a severe negative impact on fund raising for Israel.

But according to the executive of one major federation, the actual impact of the crisis on fund raising has been minimal.

“This honestly is not an enormous concern,” said Barry Shrage, president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

While the federation is very concerned about the emotional impact that the proposed legislation would have on Jews' sense of unity, he said, “almost the last thing we're concerned about is whether this will harm the campaign.”

Shrage and Yoskowitz, along with the executive directors of several other large-city Jewish federations, met with Yoffie and Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, immediately after the movements' news conference Tuesday.

They have been meeting periodically in recent months to discuss ways to enhance cooperation between federations and synagogues in the local communities.

The Orthodox Union, an organization representing about 1,000 Orthodox synagogues with about 600,000 members, is unhappy that UJA Federations is getting involved with the pluralism issue.

“We feel they've overstepped their bounds,” said Mandell Ganchrow, the O.U. president. “Their job is to be a charity and not to be involved in the activities and political desires of any of the streams.”

For now, Ganchrow said, the O.U. is refraining from adding its voice to the debate, because it believes that American Jewish organizations should let Israelis and their elected officials work out their own issues.

At the same time, he said, “it's very hard for us to sit quietly when one party puts ads in *The New York Times*. If we don't say anything to the government, then the perception that the Reform and Conservative movements speak for American Jewry is allowed to stand.” □

## Cameras planned for mosque

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli officials are planning to install cameras and other security equipment in Jerusalem's Al-Aksa Mosque.

The detention earlier this week of 14 members of a Denver-based doomsday cult underscored the need for improved security at Jerusalem's holy sites, a police spokeswoman said. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Lithuanian trial delayed

The trial of a Lithuanian accused of being involved in Nazi war crimes was postponed after the defendant, claiming poor health, did not appear in a Vilnius court. Kazys Gimzauskas, 90, is accused of handing over Jews to the Nazis when he was a Lithuanian security police official during the war. Meanwhile, the trial of alleged Lithuanian collaborator Aleksandras Lileikis is expected to resume Thursday after having been postponed several times because of Lileikis' poor health.

### Russians create interfaith body

Representatives of Russia's major faiths created an interfaith body aimed at bringing the country's religious groups closer together. At a meeting in Moscow last month, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and of Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist communities agreed to set up the Permanent Interfaith Council, which is believed to be the first such group in Russia. After the council is registered as an official organization, it is expected to issue an appeal to Russia's religious communities to oppose the current surge in anti-Semitism.

### Maccabiah resignation demanded

Four Israeli Maccabiah medalists are calling for the leader of the Jewish sports organization to step down during an inquiry into the 1997 bridge collapse at the Maccabiah games. The collapse killed four Australian athletes and injured dozens of others. During a Knesset inquiry into the collapse, the athletes turned in their medals to underscore their protest.

### Hillel aims to send more to Israel

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life plans to quadruple the number of Hillel students who go to Israel annually by 2001. Hillel President Richard Joel's call to increase the total to 4,000 students came during Hillel's annual professional conference in Princeton, N.J.

### Romania to teach Holocaust

Romania introduced mandatory Holocaust studies in its schools to "keep alive the memory of the Holocaust tragedies," according to a spokesperson for the Education Ministry. Romanian teachers will undergo training in Israel to teach the courses, which are expected to begin in several months.

### French clerics to debate religion

A group of Jewish, Christian and Islamic clerics in France is planning to hold six debates on the Bible and the Koran. The debates are slated to be held in a Reform synagogue, a Protestant church and the main Paris mosque.

## Russia reaffirms pledge to return Nazi-looted art

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Russia has reaffirmed its commitment to return works of art stolen by the Nazis during the Holocaust that are now housed in Russian museums.

But Western hopes that Russia has many of these works are "exaggerated," the Foreign Ministry said in a recent statement.

At an international conference held in Washington on Holocaust-era assets last month, Russia agreed to return to Holocaust victims or their heirs art looted by the Nazis.

Experts say such restitution would be difficult under a Russian "trophy art" law issued last year.

The law requires that claims should be made by governments rather than individuals.

In addition, a work can be returned only if the Russian Parliament approves each restitution by a separate act.

The bill has also been criticized for not distinguishing between artworks that belonged to Germany and those that were looted by the Nazis from other countries.

Moreover, the April 1998 law set a deadline of November 1999 to make a request for restitution.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Vladimir Rakhmanin has been quoted as saying the government would be willing to extend the deadline.

At the end of the war, the Soviet Union dispatched special teams to collect thousands of paintings, as well as archival material that included manuscripts and photographs, from the defeated Nazis.

Valery Kulishov, director of the restitution department with the Russian Ministry of Culture and head of the Russian delegation at the December conference in Washington, said in an interview that Russian museums contain some objects whose origins are unknown.

"But this does not mean that they necessarily belong to Holocaust victims," Kulishov added.

Since the end of World War II, Russia has zealously guarded information about the details of the art taken from Nazi Germany.

About 200,000 pieces of this trophy art are now reportedly stored in Russian museums and private collections.

In a related development, a Hungarian diplomat stationed in Russia reiterated that her country would claim art confiscated from prominent Hungarian Jewish families during World War II.

In an interview published in the daily newspaper *Kommersant*, Rita Mayer, the counselor for cultural affairs at the Hungarian Embassy, specifically mentioned the names of several Hungarian Jews whose collections, first confiscated by the Nazis, are now kept in state-run museums in Moscow and Central Russia.

"Their heirs are alive, and even if they are not, the property belongs to Hungarian Jewish community," Mayer said.

Some art was taken by the Red Army from banks in Budapest where Jews were forced to deposit their valuables in the late 1930s.

Other objects came from the collection of top Nazi official Adolf Eichmann, who stole them in 1944.

According to Mayer, Hungary has documents proving the origin of these art objects. One of such works is the portrait of a woman by French painter Camille Corot — allegedly originally from the collection of Hungarian Jew Ferenz Hatvani — which is now a prized possession of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow.

Last year, the Hungarian government asked Moscow about the fate of art treasures stolen by the Nazis from Hungarian citizens, including Jews. In its request, Hungary mentioned at least one Hungarian Jew as being the rightful owner of a collection of paintings now in Russia.

Russia has yet to return any of the works. □

## Honor urged for U.K. official who saved thousands of Jews

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — A British diplomat who saved as many as 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust deserves official recognition from Israel, according to a senior British Jewish leader.

Lord Janner, head of the London-based Holocaust Educational Trust, said Frank Foley should be designated one of the Righteous Among Nations by Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial to recognize Foley's efforts to rescue Jews from Nazi Germany.

And based on evidence that is only now emerging, Foley could enter the history books as one of the great heroic figures of the Holocaust period, equal to Oskar Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg and the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara.

As director of the British passport office in Berlin during the 1930s, Foley freely handed out visas to Jews in Germany and sheltered several in his home, Janner said in an open letter to Yad Vashem officials.

Middle-aged, with round, owlish glasses framing a face topped by a balding head, Foley did not cut a particularly heroic figure in 1930s Berlin. But he was more than he appeared to be: Far from his public role as a paper-pusher, Foley fulfilled his true mission as the Berlin station chief for British intelligence until the outbreak of World War II.

Foley used his power and influence as British passport control officer in Berlin — a cover for his intelligence work — to help German Jews immigrate to Britain and its colonies, including Palestine. Unlike Schindler, whose industrial enterprises benefited from the Jews he saved, or Wallenberg, who operated under diplomatic protection, Foley received no financial reward nor did he enjoy diplomatic immunity.

Born in 1884, Foley was a veteran of World War I. Fluent in German and French, he was recruited to Britain's MI6 intelligence agency, where he rose to the rank of captain.

By the end of World War II, Foley had compiled a prodigious record of achievement. He had convinced scores of German spies to become double agents, organized the operation that saved Norway's gold reserves from being looted by the Nazis, and persuaded leading German scientists not to pass on essential data about atomic and rocket advances to their Nazi superiors.

Foley was a principal interrogator of Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, who flew to Britain in a bizarre attempt to strike a peace deal when the war was already lost. Foley also recruited a high-level Soviet spy who, for years after the war, continued to feed Britain information on Soviet espionage.

But it was the rescue — at great personal risk — of German Jews that will be Foley's legacy. The remarkable story is told in "Foley: The Spy Who Saved 10,000 Jews," by British journalist Michael Smith, which will soon be published in Britain.

According to Smith, Foley "ignored all the rules to help Jews to leave the country, sometimes demanding to be let into concentration camps, to get them out, occasionally hiding them in his own home, and using his Secret Service skills to provide them with false papers and passports."

Among those who sought shelter in Foley's apartment was Rabbi Leo Baeck, the charismatic head of the Association of German Rabbis, who used the venue to brief foreign journalists on

the increasing persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich.

The question that baffled Benno Cohn, then chairman of the German Zionist Organization, and his colleagues in the Zionist movement was why Foley should demonstrate such commitment at such high personal risk to save Jews.

"He told us he was acting as a Christian and that he wanted to show us how little the 'Christians' who were then in power in Germany had to do with Christianity. He detested the Nazis and looked on their political system — as he once told me — as the rule of Satan on earth," Cohn said in the book.

Foley's work in Berlin, said Smith, was "a stupendous act of humanity, borne not out of political necessity but out of a moral imperative: thousands of Jews came to the little office on Tiergartenstrasse, frightened, panicky and desperate for help.

"In the tiny office they found a tiny staff grappling with a blizzard of paper, and at its center a small, round man in spectacles. He did not let them down."

Foley's wife, Kay, recalled that he worked without a break from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., personally handling as many applications as he could, assisting his staff and giving advice and comfort to those who were waiting for their applications to be processed.

Eventually the line outside the office was a mile long. As Kay Foley observed in the book: "Some were hysterical. Many wept. All were desperate. With them came a flood of cables and letters from other parts of the country, all pleading for visas and begging for help."

As conditions worsened for Jews in Berlin, Foley took greater risks by allowing some Jews, including Baeck, to live in his home at Lessingstrasse 56. Between 1933 and 1939, tens of thousands more people received visas than should have, given a strict interpretation of the rules according to Hubert Pollack, one of the Jewish workers trying to get Jews into Palestine. "I know possibly better than any other Jew alive how great our debt of gratitude is toward that honest and courageous man," he said in the book.

"The number of Jews saved from Germany would have been tens of thousands less," he said, "if an officious bureaucrat had sat in Foley's place. There is no word of Jewish gratitude toward this man which could be exaggerated."

Even after he locked up his office on Tiergartenstrasse for the last time on Aug. 25, 1939, Foley continued to help Jews escape. During the first week of the war, Youth Aliyah certificates that he had signed were used by the U.S. Embassy to send hundreds of Jewish children to safety in Scandinavia and, through the Italian port of Trieste, to Palestine.

"He carried out thousands of rescues when one can be enough to qualify," Janner wrote to Yad Vashem. "He risked his own life and position, and did not seek any remuneration for his actions."

Paula Quirk and her family, who live in London, owe their survival to Foley. She feels "very strongly that the English people who helped never got the credit they deserved. Foley, in his modesty, never told people how much he did."

Frank Foley died in 1958. Was it simple modesty that prevented him from discussing his role in 1930s Berlin? Why has his story remained unknown for so long?

According to author Smith, Foley's association with British intelligence inhibited him from discussing the activities he performed while in the service. "He was not allowed to talk to people when he came back to Britain," said Smith. "His life in Berlin had to remain secret." □