



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Blackmun's legacy hailed

Jewish leaders and legal scholars remembered retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun as a staunch defender of religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

Blackmun was "one of the most eloquent defenders of America's core concept of fundamental liberties and freedom who has ever sat on the Supreme Court," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. [Page 1]

Labor backs 'One Israel' bloc

Israel's Labor Party approved the formation of a joint Knesset list with the Geshet Party and Meimad, a moderate Orthodox movement.

As a result of the agreement, Geshet leader David Levy gets the third slot on Labor's "One Israel" slate of candidates.

AIPAC calls for Wye aid

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee called on Congress to provide the additional U.S. aid to Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan that was promised during last October's Wye peace talks.

Under the Clinton administration's proposal, the aid would be spread over three years, with Israel receiving \$1.2 billion, the Palestinian Authority \$400 million and Jordan \$300 million.

"To help the peace process succeed, it is important for the Palestinian people to see real economic benefits. Providing this assistance will help realize that," AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr said during testimony before the House appropriations subcommittee responsible for writing the annual U.S. foreign aid bill.

First secular burials held in Israel

Israel's first secular burials took place at a cemetery in Beersheba. The burials of Ya'akov and Hannah Ravervi came after their bodies had been stored at a medical institute for six months while secular rights advocates wrangled with Orthodox religious officials over where the burial plots would be located.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1996 against the Orthodox monopoly over burials and ordered the Religious Affairs Ministry to set aside space in Jewish cemeteries for alternative burials.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Justice Blackmun is remembered for his defense of religious liberties

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Harry Blackmun may best be remembered for authoring the historic 1973 decision legalizing abortion, but his defense of religious liberties stands as no less important in the minds of many Jews.

The retired Supreme Court justice, who died Thursday at the age of 90 following complications from hip replacement surgery, served 24 years on the high court before stepping down in 1994.

Appointed by President Nixon in 1970, Blackmun, a lifelong Republican, was expected to serve as a voice of staunch conservatism.

But he moved to the left as the years went by and was considered one of the court's more liberal jurists by the time he retired.

A stalwart defender of both a strict separation of church and state and the free exercise of religion, Blackmun opposed mandatory prayer in public schools, the display of sectarian symbols on public property and the use of tax funds for parochial schools.

At the same time, he supported wide accommodations for religious practice free from government intrusion or discrimination.

Blackmun "was one of the most eloquent defenders of America's core concept of fundamental liberties and freedom who has ever sat on the Supreme Court," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"In his passionate defense of religious freedom, in the sensitivities to minority religions manifested in his decisions and in his support for the wall separating church and state, he eloquently represented a view that is shared by a substantial number of American Jews — a view that has greatly enhanced the freedoms and opportunities that Jews have enjoyed in America," said Saperstein, who also teaches constitutional law at Georgetown University Law School.

He summed up his church-state philosophy in a concurring opinion he wrote in a 1992 case, *Lee vs. Weisman*, opposing school-sponsored prayer at graduation ceremonies.

"The mixing of government and religion can be a threat to free government, even if no one is forced to participate," he wrote.

"When the government puts its imprimatur on a particular religion, it conveys a message of exclusion to all those who do not adhere to the favored beliefs. A government cannot be premised on the belief that all persons are created equal when it asserts that God prefers some."

While most Jewish groups concurred with Blackmun's philosophy on the separation of church and state, some in the Orthodox community viewed him as too inflexible in his opposition to government assistance to religious schools. But his commitment to protecting religious freedom for all Americans was unmistakable.

It was Blackmun's decision in *Roe vs. Wade* — the controversial abortion ruling that touched off one of the century's most polarizing and emotional political debates — that will endure as his legacy.

Marc Stern, co-director of the American Jewish Congress' legal department, called it "unfortunate" that "one opinion sort of marked him for life and after death, too."

Most of the organized Jewish community supports abortion rights, although many Orthodox Jews are opposed.

David Zwiebel, general counsel and director of government affairs for the fervently

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israel, E.U. ink agreement

Israel and the European Union formally signed an agreement that will allow the Jewish state to take part in a \$16 billion E.U. research and development program.

The signing, which took place after E.U. officials voted last month to approve Israel's participation, was seen as a major diplomatic victory for Israel, the only non-European country to be included in the program.

Sharon questioned by police

Israeli police questioned Ariel Sharon regarding allegations that the foreign minister bribed a former general to give false testimony in a 1997 libel trial.

Sharon denied the allegations that he included Avigdor Ben Gal in a delegation to Russia, and pledged to help him obtain a natural gas deal there, in exchange for Ben Gal's changing his testimony at the trial.

Sharon lost the suit he brought against the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, which had run an article charging that Sharon had misled the government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin about his plans to launch a full-scale invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Abdullah names prime minister

Jordan's King Abdullah named a leading supporter of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel as his new prime minister.

Abdul-Waouf Rawabdeh was a confidant of Abdullah's late father, King Hussein.

Water shortages feared

A leading Israeli water expert warned of possible shortages if policies regarding water usage are not altered.

Hillel Shoval said two-thirds of the potable water in Israel is used for agricultural purposes. His comments came after meteorologists described this winter as the driest in Israel since the early 1950s.

Orthodox Agudath Israel of America, said that while his organization does not support Blackmun's decision on abortion, he is troubled that some of his group's allies in the pro-life camp still invoke Blackmun's name with "disdain and contempt."

"That's quite unfortunate because whatever one's position on the abortion issue, and whatever the quality of that particular opinion, this man built a legacy over 24 years, and to think of him only in terms of this one ruling does his memory a disservice," Zwiebel said.

Blackmun received a number of death threats and a slew of hate mail from anti-abortion groups over the years. He once said in a television interview that he had been called "butcher of Dachau, murderer, Pontius Pilate, King Herod — you name it."

Blackmun once told the Associated Press that he hoped he would be remembered "as a person of judicial integrity who wrote acceptably well and contributed in more than one field. I'd like to be known just as a good worker in the vineyard who held his own and contributed generally to the advancement of law."

For many in the Jewish community, he will also be remembered for his warmth and humanity.

Over the years, Blackmun cleared time to speak to a number of Jewish groups, including an appearance before the National Council of Jewish Women, a staunch pro-choice organization.

"He was so generous with his time in terms of staying around to shake hands with people, had a warm word for everybody and just was such a down-to-earth, decent guy," Sammie Moshenberg, director of the group's Washington office, said, adding that she had him autograph a copy of the Constitution she still carries in her briefcase.

"He was a great and very courageous man, who understood that first and foremost the court's responsibility was administering justice, and he never deviated from that vision," Moshenberg said, adding that his death marks "a great loss." □

German extremists rallying in effort to fight citizenship law

By Deidre Berger

FRANKFURT (JTA) — Efforts to grant German citizenship to foreigners living in Germany are galvanizing the extreme right wing here.

Police last weekend detained at least 94 people in an attempt to prevent clashes between right-wing groups and left-wing counter-demonstrators.

About a thousand right-wing extremists marched in the eastern German city of Magdeburg over the weekend to protest government plans to reform outdated citizenship laws. Bells tolled at numerous local churches to obstruct the sounds of the demonstrators, and a group of about 500 left-wing demonstrators protesting the march of the right-wing clashed with police.

Although the overall number of racist attacks by right-wing extremists is on the decline in Germany, this incident and others like it are reminding Germans that right-wing violence, which rose sharply after unification, remains a major problem.

The right-wing demonstrators were particularly angry over a pledge made by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, which he recently dropped, that would enable many foreigners in Germany to acquire dual nationality.

The issue of opposing citizenship law reform has struck a chord among youth and unemployed men who feel economically disenfranchised.

But mainstream politicians have also opposed the changes. The conservative opposition in Germany has launched a campaign against the legislation, and opposition to citizenship reform was a major factor in the victory of a conservative coalition last month in the important state election of Hesse.

Also in the eastern part of Germany, a group of alleged right-wing radicals beat a 29-year-old Angolan man so badly he needed hospital attention. Police arrested two men after the incident.

Two weeks ago, in the eastern German city of Guben, the chase of an Algerian by a group of neo-Nazis ended in the young man's death after he leaped through a glass door to escape his pursuers. □



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JEWISH WORLD

War crimes trial postponed

The Simon Wiesenthal Center criticized the decision by a Croatian court to postpone the trial of the commander of the country's largest World War II concentration camp.

The court, ruling that Dinko Sakic is too ill to stand trial, postponed the start of proceedings until March 15. Sakic is charged with committing war crimes while head of the Jasenovac camp, where an estimated 600,000 Jews, Serbs and Gypsies were killed.

Sweden reports on Nazi dealings

Sweden's business dealings with Nazi Germany involved only small amounts of gold and other valuables looted from Holocaust victims, according to a Swedish government commission.

The commission ended its 2-year probe by saying in a report that there is little evidence the Scandinavian nation "deliberately tried to profit" by dealing in Nazi-looted assets. "We were not like Switzerland, which was known as the banking country" of the Third Reich, the report said.

Group seeks Duke's expulsion

The American Jewish Congress recently called on the Republican National Committee to expel white supremacist David Duke from the party.

Duke, who is running to fill the congressional seat being vacated by Rep. Bob Livingston (R-La.), has classified himself as "an elected official of the Republican Party" in the New Orleans area, according to the AJCongress. The Jewish defense agency said it has made a similar appeal to RNC Chairman Jim Nicholson but has not received a response.

Hitler fan may win Austrian vote

Opinion polls indicate that a right-wing politician who has praised Hitler could emerge victorious when Austria holds elections Sunday in a key province. Jörg Haider, head of the xenophobic Freedom Party, could become governor of the southern province of Carinthia as a result of the vote.

France to publish Vichy archives

France will publish later this month archives detailing the systematic persecution of French Jews during World War II, the French Culture Ministry announced. The announcement was made as a commission is preparing a report on the looting of Jewish assets by France's pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

Nathan's dogs go glatt

Nathan's hot dogs opened its first kosher outlet. The Nathan's in Brooklyn is the first of 10 glatt kosher restaurants the chain hopes to open across the United States.

Survey: Powerful link exists between Jewish camp and identity

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Silicon Valley, a hotbed of high technology, is cutting edge in more ways than one, boasts the executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose.

Two years ago, the federation started a summer camp scholarship program to provide financial aid "to every child who wanted to go to Jewish summer camp and couldn't afford it," said Jon Friedenberg.

Last year, he said, the community sent more than 40 kids to Jewish camps, where tuition runs from \$1,000 for day camps to \$4,500 for overnight camps. It was money well spent, according to a new study of Jewish residential summer camps conducted by the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish & Communal Research.

Jointly published by the institute and the 5-month-old Foundation for Jewish Camping, the study shows that "a quality Jewish resident experience is a powerful force for building a strong and lasting Jewish identity among Jewish youth" — a fun and social complement to other continuity initiatives, such as day schools and trips to Israel.

Gary Tobin, the institute's president, said, "There is a growing recognition that camping is one of the ways to reinforce Jewish identity and participation."

He added, "All this interest in Jewish renaissance and rebuilding in the Jewish community requires enormous investment" on the part of federations, private foundations and individual philanthropists.

Camps require investment on several fronts — personnel, capital facilities and program development — if they are to compete with other summer activities, he said.

The camping study found that a large number of Jewish youth attend Jewish camps with no explicit Jewish mission and that many Jewish camps "compete with non-Jewish camps that provide better and/or more modern facilities and programming."

The study is the first phase of a three-part investigation of the issues and needs of — as well as the potential for — Jewish summer overnight camps in North America.

Its initial findings were culled from a variety of sources: personal interviews and discussion groups with Jewish camping professionals, a brief telephone survey of camps and demographic studies from local Jewish communities — Atlanta, Delaware, Denver, Detroit, Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia — conducted by the New York-based firm of Ukeles Associates.

The Tobin study also notes two surveys of Jewish communal professionals which found that more than 50 percent of the respondents had attended Jewish camps as children. But Tobin also makes it clear that Jewish identity is formed by a combination of factors, including community programs, home values and life experiences.

"It is possible," he writes, "that children whose homes incorporate stronger Jewish values are more likely to attend Jewish camp than other children."

Some of the study's other major findings show:

- a strong relationship exists between individuals who attended Jewish resident camps as children and several measures of Jewish identity, including the importance of being Jewish, marriage patterns, observance and affiliation;
- a preponderance of camps — including those under Jewish auspices, private Jewish camps and non-Jewish — are in the Northeast;
- widespread difficulty in recruiting qualified Jewish staff, especially men;
- few Jewish camps have been established in the past 20 years — nine by Jewish organizations and one privately owned; and
- the cost of camps — averaging \$500 per week per child — is prohibitive for some families, especially "when added to the cost of day school, Hebrew school, and other costs of Jewish affiliation."

While many individual camps are doing well, especially camps under denominational auspices, Tobin said, "That does not mean that the population as a whole is being served.

"Camping is illustrative of the fact that we have the tools to do what needs to be done," he said.

"The question is: Do we have the will to invest in the Jewish future?" □

Sharansky looks back on past, seeing just what KGB had on him

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Natan Sharansky got a rare chance recently to review 20-year-old KGB documents relating to his activities on behalf of Russian Jewry.

Heading a trade delegation on a two-day trip to Moscow, Sharansky, Israel's minister of industry and trade, met with Vladimir Putin, head of the Federal Security Service, the successor to the Soviet-era KGB.

During that meeting, Putin showed Sharansky his KGB dossier — some 52 volumes of documents — including papers relating to his arrest and conviction in 1977 on charges of spying for the United States.

Putin gave some of the documents to Sharansky, who spent nine years in Soviet prisons as a result of his campaign for Jewish emigration rights in the Soviet Union during the 1970s.

Sharansky later said he was impressed to see all the piles of documents — and the one piece of paper certifying that he was "rehabilitated" less than a decade ago, under then-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Two years ago, during his first trip to Russia as a member of the Israeli Cabinet, Sharansky was denied access to the KGB documents.

Sharansky said the documents contained "so much grudge, so much bitterness."

But just the same, he found reason for optimism in the fact that this page of his personal history — and that of his native land — now belonged to the past.

"Where today are all those investigators? Where is the KGB?" he said in a television interview.

This was Sharansky's third visit to Moscow since 1997, when he visited the Lefortovo Prison, where he had spent 18 months in isolation.

The official part of his latest visit focused on three issues: economic cooperation between Israel and Russia, Russia's nuclear assistance to Iran and the recent growth of anti-Semitism in Russia.

In the meeting with Putin, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin, Sharansky discussed Israeli concerns about the physical safety of the Russian Jewish community.

Sharansky asked them whether they believed that recent anti-Semitic statements by members of the Russian Parliament could lead to pogroms.

"They agreed that such a danger exists, at least purely theoretically," Sharansky said later.

He added that his Russian hosts had assured him that they were monitoring the situation.

In another meeting about Russia's nuclear cooperation with Iran, Sharansky suggested that Israel and the West should attempt to involve Russian scientists in international research projects so that Russian strategic interests would follow those of the West instead of Iran.

Earlier, Sharansky had been greeted by some 500 members of the Moscow Jewish community, who packed the Moscow House of Cinema to see the former Prisoner of Zion.

Thirteen years after his release from a Soviet gulag, many in

the audience still viewed Sharansky as a hero.

"He was among those people who made democracy in this country possible," Sima Landau, a retired librarian, said, echoing the view of many here. □

Faced with investigation, governor apologizes to Jews

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Faced with a possible investigation by federal officials, the governor of the southern Russian region of Krasnodar has publicly apologized to the region's Jews for his repeated anti-Semitic remarks.

In a televised address, Nikolai Kondratenko told the region's Jews that he was their "relative" and that he regretted if they had misunderstood any of his previous statements.

But at the same time, apparently unable to back off completely from earlier stances, Kondratenko reiterated his opposition to Zionism, stating that he still considers it a threat to his region's stability.

During the years of Soviet rule, authorities often drew the same distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism and used it for political purposes.

Kondratenko has gained notoriety across Russia for regularly peppering his speeches with attacks on Zionists and "Judeo-Masons," whom he blames for all of the country's economic troubles.

His decision to reach out to the region's Jews did not appear to stem from entirely selfless motives.

His televised appearance came in the wake of reports that Russian prosecutors are considering whether to investigate his earlier anti-Semitic comments.

It also came after officials with President Boris Yeltsin's administration dispatched representatives to several Russian regions, including Krasnodar, to monitor whether local authorities are following Yeltsin's directive to combat political extremism and ethnic intolerance.

While Kondratenko's televised address may not have been all they had hoped for, leaders of Krasnodar's Jewish community say it had at least one beneficial effect on the community.

They said regional officials have given the community a small building for use as a synagogue.

Krasnodar's old synagogue was confiscated during the Stalinist era and is now dilapidated.

Jews in Krasnodar recently gathered to celebrate the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs of 18 youths in what was the first such ceremony in this largely agricultural area since World War II.

Zinovy Kogan, the executive director of the Moscow-based Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations in Russia, told JTA that a group of neo-Nazis held their weekly gathering in a central square adjacent to the building where the Jewish celebration was taking place.

But the neo-Nazi gathering was not related to the celebration, he said, adding that the convergence of the two sharply contrasting events was characteristic of Krasnodar and other Russian provincial centers.

"Local Jews say they have long gotten used to seeing these gatherings," Kogan said. □