



# Daily News Bulletin

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82<sup>nd</sup> Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### BEHIND THE HEADLINES

## South African Jews look to new government with hope and dread

By Suzanne Belling

### Voucher program struck down

A U.S. federal appeals court struck down a Maine school voucher program as an unconstitutional violation of the separation between church and state.

The program provided reimbursements to students who must attend private or parochial schools outside of their districts because their towns do not have public high schools.

Last week's ruling, which came on the heels of a decision by the Ohio Supreme Court upholding a Cleveland voucher program, was the highest-level court decision on vouchers.

### Legal fees sought in Swiss case

Lawyers who represented Holocaust survivors in a class-action lawsuit against Swiss banks are requesting \$25 million in legal fees for their role in last year's \$1.25 billion settlement with the banks.

The request for fees, which amounts to 2 percent of the settlement, must be approved by a federal judge in New York.

Jewish groups, meanwhile, are preparing to launch a major advertising campaign later this month to notify all possible beneficiaries about how to apply for payments from the settlement. [Page 3]

### Study focuses on cancer gene

Two genetic mutations that have been linked to breast cancer among Ashkenazi women may cause only a small number of cases, according to a British study.

Only a small percentage of woman with breast cancer in the study had the mutated BRCA-1 and BRCA-2 genes, the researchers wrote in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. Having two or more close relatives with breast cancer is a stronger predictor, the researchers said Tuesday.

### Premier holds emergency parley

Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened an emergency meeting of his Security Cabinet on Tuesday for a briefing from army officials about stepped-up Hezbollah operations in southern Lebanon. The operations, which came as the Israel-allied South Lebanon Army began to withdraw from a Christian enclave in the region, elicited warnings from Israel that they would not allow Hezbollah attacks on the SLA during its withdrawal.

JOHANNESBURG (JTA) — The first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994 brought about universal franchise, a black-led government and a peaceful revolution. People voted with their hearts — or fears.

Wednesday's elections were different. People voted with their heads.

This was an election about future government and governance, rather than the heady emotion of transformation.

But the attitudes of Jewish voters are split: Some welcome the huge changes during the past five years, while others find that the problems outweigh the benefits.

The first group points to the peaceful revolution that has totally confounded the prophets of doom.

"If we think back five or six years, we would have branded anyone who said that in 1999 crime and corruption would be our major problems as an unrealistic optimist," said a prominent member of the Jewish community. "But there has been no bloody revolution, no armed racial conflict. In fact, there has been a truly astounding degree of reconciliation."

Others focus more on the threat posed by a violent crime rate that reaches into virtually every corner of society, including the Jewish community.

A significant number of Jews have emigrated and others are seriously considering doing so — mainly to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, further depleting the 94,000 Jews who were estimated to live in South Africa in 1996.

But there was no renewed wave of emigration preceding Wednesday's elections. Most adopted a wait-and-see attitude regarding the African National Congress government under Thabo Mbeki, who was expected to win the elections overwhelmingly. Official results will not be available until later this week. If Mbeki is declared the winner, he will be inaugurated as president on June 16.

Outgoing President Nelson Mandela astounded whites with his attitude of total forgiveness of past sins during the apartheid regime, but Jews fear Mbeki's approach will not be as reconciliatory.

Russell Gaddin, chairman of the Gauteng Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the country's Jewish umbrella organization, said Jews are nervous and uncertain about Mbeki because they don't know enough about him.

"When I met him, I was struck by his strength. He is a born leader.

"We need to understand that, over the last five years, the government has undergone a tremendous learning curve. They have now got their priorities in line, and I am confident they will be able to deal with crime and the economy."

Another priority of the new government may be improved relations with Israel.

With the South African elections following soon after Ehud Barak's victory in the Israeli elections, Abe Abrahamson, honorary life president of the South African Zionist Federation, said the "Israel scenario has positive implications for relations between the two countries.

"The situation is now entirely different from what it was some weeks ago. I have confidence in the new Israeli prime minister to get the coalition for peace going."

Relations between Israel and this country have been somewhat strained in post-apartheid South Africa because of the ANC's strong ties with the Palestinians and Libya. "The South African government is not anti-Israel, but feels that the Palestinians

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinians appeal to Barak

The Palestinian Authority sent a message Wednesday to Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak demanding that he stop construction of Jewish housing in the West Bank as well as in disputed parts of Jerusalem.

The message came one day before a Palestinian-declared "Day of Anger" to protest the construction.

Palestinian Authority official Yasser Abed Rabbo told reporters that the demonstrations would be "only the beginning" if the construction continues.

Meanwhile, Israeli Arab legislators complained Tuesday that Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak is ignoring them in coalition talks while at the same time seeking to bring right-wing parties into his government. Barak's government will be "right wing with a leftist cover," Taleb Alsana, a member of the Arab Democratic Party, told the Reuters news agency.

### 100 immigrants to fly to Israel

Some 100 Jewish immigrants from South America are scheduled to arrive in Israel on Thursday.

The immigrants, an unusually large group to come to Israel from the West, will be accompanied by 15 youths who will be participating in an educational program with young people in Israel.

### Family seeks bomber's remains

The family of a Palestinian suicide bomber petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice on Sunday for the return of his body. Sufian al-Jabreen killed six Israelis in a 1995 bus bombing in Jerusalem.

### Israel takes fifth at Eurovision

The Israeli music group Eden took fifth place in this year's Eurovision song contest for its song "Happy Birthday." The Swedish entry, sung by Charlotte Nilsson, won the contest, which was held last weekend in Jerusalem. Last year, the Israeli transsexual Dana International took first place in the contest.



## Daily News Bulletin

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have to have their needs, as they understand them, met," said Rabbi Norman Bernhard of Johannesburg's Oxford Synagogue.

The Democratic Party, which appears to have been the most popular party with white English-speaking and Jewish citizens in this election, is hoping to replace the New National Party as the official opposition.

Even before election results were in, it was clear that the Democratic Party's Jewish leader, Tony Leon, will continue to lead it on a national basis, while his brother, Peter, will maintain leadership of the party on a provincial level.

Many white voters expressed fear that the ANC would achieve a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, which would allow it to alter fundamental aspects of the constitution that protect minorities.

Peter Leon shares their concern. He further believes that if the constitution is altered, some professionals, including many Jews, would emigrate.

But, he added, "Other than Islamic fundamentalism in the Western Cape, there is more tolerance towards the Jewish community today than there was in the past."

ANC Parliament member Andrew Feinstein, who is likely to retain his seat, said the concern about the constitution was "a complete red herring."

"People forget the ANC is not just a majority, but by far the most representative party in the country. All minorities are represented in it, and there is therefore no reason why the rights of minorities should not continue," he said.

Dina Saffer, national chairwoman of the South African Union of Jewish Students, said the greatest concern of students is the ANC's affirmative action policy, which limits post-university employment opportunities for whites.

"It is seen as discrimination," she said. "Students generally talk about 'when' they are going, not 'if.' Though there are opportunities, here the vision of students is colored by affirmative action. They can't see through — or past — it."

Debbie Gordon, a 23-year-old medical student, believes the ANC government has been guilty of "reverse apartheid" by limiting university admissions and job placements for whites. She is also concerned about health care facilities and a lowering of standards.

"The ANC government is dealing with problems symptomatically, rather than treating the cause. They keep bringing up the past, rather than concentrating on the problems of today. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to deal with those."

She believes there is no future for young people in South Africa, "especially considering that two students were held up at gunpoint in their cars during peak-hour traffic last week — under the eyes of a traffic cop a few yards away.

"They should enforce law and order and bring back the death penalty," she said.

Helen Heldenmuth, a producer of religious programs for television, was more optimistic.

"These elections were an incredible experience — so little violence, with voters showing respect and orderliness.

"I have every confidence in Mbeki. He represents the strong upper-class blacks emerging in this country. The crime was always horrific in the black townships, but whites are only noticing it more because it has spilled over into their areas and because there is no press censorship."

She chastised pessimistic members of the Jewish community. "They lived in luxury long enough. It is now time for them to take part in the country and in building the nation," she said.

In an election message to the Jewish community, Mbeki referred to the Jewish contribution to the country in all spheres of life — business, the professions, the arts, science, culture, education, sports, medicine and politics.

"The community's positive outlook and efforts towards nation-building are indeed appreciated. For its contribution, as a minority community, far exceeds its numbers," Mbeki said.

"We hope that your efforts in outreach and development will continue even more in the future as we embark, together with all citizens of South Africa, still further along the democratic road of peace and prosperity." □

(South African Jewish Report correspondent Paula Slier contributed to this report.)

## JEWISH WORLD

### More survivors to receive money

Some 20,000 needy Holocaust survivors in about 13 countries will receive one-time payments later this year from a \$185 million Swiss fund that was created in 1997, the World Jewish Congress said Tuesday.

The payments, to be distributed to survivors in such countries as Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany and Mexico, will range between \$700 and \$1,300, the WJC said.

The fund is separate from a \$1.25 billion class-action settlement reached last year with leading Swiss banks.

### Anne Frank's cousin gets threats

The chairman of the Swiss-based Anne Frank Foundation received death threats this week at his home in Basel.

The threats came after Buddy Elias, who is a cousin of Frank, known for her diary chronicling her family's clandestine life in Amsterdam during World War II, filed a claim at the local Prosecutors Office against an anti-Semitic group.

"Your race should leave Switzerland together with all other stinking Jews," the anonymous letter stated.

### Museum hails indictments

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Committee on Conscience welcomed last week's indictments by the international war crimes tribunal of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and four top associates as "only a first step that must not become merely a symbolic gesture."

The committee called for the apprehension of two prominent Bosnian Serb leaders, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, who remain at large despite their indictment by the international war crimes tribunal.

### Rabbi calls for Christian prayers

Britain's official millennium celebrations should be marked with Christian prayers, according to the nation's chief rabbi.

Citing the religious nature of the millennium, Jonathan Sacks said Tuesday that it is by definition a Christian celebration.

### Alleged war criminal leaves U.S.

A man who lived in the United States for nearly three decades returned Saturday to Lithuania rather than testify about his activities as a policeman in his Nazi-occupied homeland during World War II.

The fight by Aloyzas Balsys, 86, to stay in the United States without testifying resulted last year in a landmark Supreme Court decision that fear of prosecution abroad is insufficient grounds to invoke the Fifth Amendment's protection from self-incrimination.

## Lawyers in Swiss case seek \$25 million; campaign to find the beneficiaries is slated

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Lawyers who represented Holocaust survivors in a class-action lawsuit against Swiss banks are requesting \$25 million in legal fees for their role in last year's \$1.25 billion settlement.

But any decision regarding fees must be approved by the federal judge in New York serving as an arbiter between the banks and Jewish representatives.

The issue of legal fees has been a source of contention between the lawyers and groups such as the World Jewish Congress, which has said it opposes anyone profiting from the Holocaust. While many of the two dozen lawyers worked on the case pro bono, a few have applied for fees, citing financial burdens.

The court overseeing the settlement, meanwhile, has ordered a major advertising campaign to begin later this month to notify all possible beneficiaries about how to apply for payments from the settlement. The administrative costs for the campaign will come out of the settlement.

Unlike a humanitarian fund of nearly \$200 million set up by Switzerland in 1997 that has provided payments to needy Holocaust survivors, the \$1.25 billion settlement is intended as restitution for those who lost assets in the Holocaust.

The \$1.25 billion settlement was reached last August after more than two years of often-contentious negotiations.

Eligible recipients include survivors who deposited assets in Swiss banks or have claims to any looted assets that made their way to Switzerland; slave laborers exploited by Swiss entities; and refugees who sought entry into Switzerland to avoid Nazi persecution and were mistreated.

There are not yet any estimates as to how many people will be eligible and how large the payments might be.

As part of the notification process, advertisements will be placed on the Internet and in more than 500 newspapers in 40 countries — with an application form and a toll-free number for information.

U.S. District Court Judge Edward Korman has set a hearing date of Nov. 29 for all interested parties to voice their opinions about the settlement. Jewish officials hope payments can begin sometime early next year. □

## Beatles producer comes to Israel 35 years after 'Fab Four' were barred

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israelis disappointed 35 years ago when the government barred the Beatles from performing here have an opportunity to gain some closure this week.

Sir George Martin, the legendary record producer who discovered the Beatles, will conduct the Israel Philharmonic in tributes to the "Fab Four" this weekend in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The collaboration with the Israel Philharmonic is the first stop on an international tour in which Sir George will conduct well-known orchestras in renditions of Beatles songs.

Sir George said he was unaware of the objections raised by the government in 1964, when the Beatles were designated persona non grata out of concern that their music would corrupt the country's youth.

"The government today is different than the one then," he said diplomatically.

The idea for the concert tour grew out of Sir George's last studio work, "In My Life," which brought together such stars as Celine Dion, Goldie Hawn and Robin Williams. More recently, he has focused on composing, orchestrating, lecturing and philanthropy.

Some of Israel's top musical artists will be appearing alongside the Israel Philharmonic in the two scheduled performances. □

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

**Berlin museum launches search for artifacts that tell of Jewish life**

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) — The walls of the new Jewish Museum here are bare, except for shard-like windows that let in slashes of light.

From the top floor, it seems the city's pre- and postwar buildings unfold outward like petals around this silvery, zigzag heart. Currently, it is a museum without exhibits, but Michael Cullen hopes to change that soon.

As coordinator of research, Cullen is appealing to the public for material for the first exhibit, which is scheduled to open in October 2000. An ad campaign is due to start in June in German Jewish publications and major newspapers here, Israel, the United States and Britain.

Cullen wants material pouring in from all places where there are people with German roots.

"We are looking for everything and everybody and everywhere we can," says Cullen, who was born in New York in 1939, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. He has lived in Berlin since 1967.

Cullen wants people to search their attics and basements for documents, photos, paintings — and photocopies are acceptable.

If something is valuable, such as a painting, the museum will consider purchasing it.

Cullen hopes to receive items related to the 1848 revolution in Germany, which was one in a wave of democratic uprisings across Europe at the time. He also wants items on Jewish life in the countryside and cities, on assimilation and conversion, and on Jewish culture.

How will he convince people to part with such material? He simply quotes Barbara Falk Sabbath of New York, who has been holding on to a box of papers about her family's life in Nazi Germany.

"I realized while at your museum that the history that I have been trying to come to terms with is not mine alone, and that the past is, and should be, shared. The box is as much yours as it is mine," Sabbath wrote to Cullen after visiting Berlin in April with her sister, Eve Haberman, who was born here.

"Everything we get can be used to help educate," Cullen says. "People should remember that there are stories behind these things that we should know."

The first exhibit will focus on German Jewish life from 1848 to 1919. But Cullen hopes to receive items from all periods of history.

Cullen said 500,000 visitors are expected each year at the museum once the exhibition galleries open. Already, tens of thousands have visited the celebrated building, designed by the Polish Israeli architect Daniel Libeskind, since it opened in February for weekend tours.

Some have called the building a sculpture in itself. Representing a broken Star of David, the museum is covered in gray zinc panels and is pierced by jagged windows.

It took six years to build the museum, and the road to its opening has been rocky, with fighting over who should direct it and what it should contain.

The city government fired the previous director, Israeli curator

Amon Barzel, reportedly because of his universal and contemporary approach to Jewish art and history.

After former U.S. Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal was hired as a replacement, he won administrative autonomy for the museum, so that he and Assistant Director Tom Freudenheim — both of whom come from families that escaped Nazi Germany — are free to make decisions about exhibits rather than work under the thumb of the Berlin city museum.

The museum's mandate has likewise changed.

Instead of focusing on the history of Jews in Berlin, it will cover German Jewish history from Roman times to today.

The estimated operating costs of the museum will be about \$11 million. Critics have said it does not own enough objects to cover its walls and fill its halls. In fact, grass-roots collecting is under way. A team of researchers has been poking around flea markets, visiting archives and museums, and picking up items that may become centerpieces of a display.

Each week, team members gather in the museum library for a show-and-tell. Last week, an old face-cream can, an enamel sign, cigarette tins, a folder of sheet music and a company log book were among the items set out on the black wood table. Each tells a story about Jewish businesses in the prewar years.

"It's really a lot of fun to find things," says historian Karin Grimmer, a member of the team. "Preparing for the exhibit is detective work."

Grimmer said she hopes the public appeal will help her find descendants of William Buchheim, who had a small shop in Hessen. The family emigrated to Cincinnati. All traces stop with the names of his granddaughters, Hella, Esther and Rebecca, born in America during the 1950s.

"We need information about their life," says Grimmer, who wants to create a display on this family business.

"It's a huge project and it will take a long time," says Freudenheim, "and hopefully it will go on forever."

Cullen knows the museum's search might conflict with the efforts of other institutions, such as New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

"I don't want to irk or bother them in their quest for material," says Cullen, noting that he is looking only for items related to Germany. "We know there is going to be competition."

But there is also cooperation, such as that established with the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, which focuses on German Jewish history, and with the Jewish museum in Frankfurt. Plans are under way for cooperation with Jewish museums in Paris and Vienna.

Why are Germans in general so interested in Jewish history? Why, some five years ago, was Berlin's exhibit on Jewish life one of the most visited shows in recent memory?

"There is a large population which is desperately trying to find out what went wrong with its history," Cullen says.

What went wrong does seem to be always in the background in Germany. But, he adds, quoting Blumenthal, "We are talking about Jewish life, not about Jewish death."

If the current search goes as planned, it won't be long before the museum's empty walls and halls are filled with objects — and the stories behind them.

To contact the museum search team, write Michael Cullen, Jewish Museum Berlin, Lindenstrasse 9-14, Berlin 10969, or e-mail [Recherchen@jmb Berlin.de](mailto:Recherchen@jmb Berlin.de) □