



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Clinton joins troubled talks

President Clinton rejoined the Israeli-Syrian talks amid reports that the two sides have become deadlocked.

"The Syrians so far have not delivered the goods," a source in the Israeli delegation at the talks in West Virginia was quoted as saying.

A Syrian official said the negotiations were in crisis.

Meanwhile, an Israeli Cabinet minister is predicting that the current round of talks will continue at least until Sunday.

"No one is packing suitcases, no one is warming up the plane engines," Haim Ramon said Thursday in Jerusalem.

He also predicted that months of tough negotiating would be needed to conclude an agreement to end the two sides' official state of war.

### Yeltsin visits Jerusalem

Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin met with Israeli officials during a lunch hosted by his Israeli counterpart.

During Thursday's meeting, Israeli President Ezer Weizman said Russia's relations with the Jewish people were filled "with many wonderful things, but also sorrows."

To prove his point, the Israeli president singled out one luncheon guest, Interior Minister Natan Sharansky, a former dissident who spent nine years in a Soviet jail before being allowed to immigrate to Israel.

Yeltsin, making a three-day visit to the region to mark the first Russian Orthodox Christmas of the new millennium, responded that Russian officials "have put an end" to anti-Semitism.

### Bank Austria settlement OK'd

A U.S. district court approved a plan under which Bank Austria agreed to pay \$40 million to settle Holocaust-era claims.

Jewish groups welcomed Thursday's settlement after the bank agreed to an amendment under which it agreed to acknowledge a moral obligation to compensate Holocaust victims.

The amendment also declares that other Austrian firms facing similar claims will not be covered by the settlement.

## AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

### Croatian Jews hope elections will end country's era of isolation

By Richard Allen Greene

ZAGREB, Croatia (JTA) — The Jewish community here is welcoming the results of Croatia's parliamentary elections, hoping that the change of government will end their country's isolation.

The apparent victory of a center-left coalition in Monday's elections marks the end of a highly nationalistic regime led by the late President Franjo Tudjman.

The coalition, which includes the Social Democrats, under Ivica Racan, and Social Liberals, led by Drazen Budisa, have promised to build bridges to the West, which, according to historian Ivo Goldstein, is good news for Croatia's 2,000 Jews.

"The Jewish population wants to be part of an integration of states because we want to have more intensive contact with other communities," said Goldstein, a professor of Jewish history at the University of Zagreb.

Final results will not be available until later this month, but Racan seems set to be the country's new prime minister. Elections for a new president are slated for Jan. 24, and this week's results are seen as an important precursor to that vote.

Goldstein was particularly elated by the results — his father, Slavko Goldstein, was a founder of the Social Liberals and was the party's first leader, from 1989 to 1990.

But Goldstein wasn't the only one who was pleased by the election results.

He said he was at the Jewish community center the day after the elections and "everybody was — not celebrating, but very happy."

The vote marked the first time that the Croatian Democratic Union, which was led by Tudjman from 1990 until his death at the end of last year, lost power since Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

Tudjman's support of a client Croat army in Bosnia and his refusal to deliver accused war criminals for trial had isolated Croatia internationally.

Goldstein said that events in the 20th century had cut Croatia's Jewish community off from other European communities. Croatian entry into the European Union — still a far-off prospect, as the E.U. has not even accepted Croatia as an applicant — would help reverse that trend, Goldstein said.

Goldstein said that although the Social Democrats is the reformed Communist Party and Budisa of the Social Liberals has a nationalist past, Croatia's Jews have nothing to fear.

"Racan is a social democrat like in Germany, and Budisa was a nationalist but is moving towards liberalism," said Goldstein.

"Budisa has never said anything about Jews," the historian said. "He is very, very far from Tudjman in terms of Jews, history, Europe, America.

"Racan and Budisa are not the best men you could find on earth," he said, "but they're better than Tudjman."

Although there is some consensus that Tudjman, the architect of independent Croatia who died Dec. 10, was not an anti-Semite, he was sometimes accused of anti-Semitism, and he altered sections of his memoirs in English translation to mute that claim.

Tudjman fought for the anti-Nazi partisans during World War II.

After Israel and Croatia established diplomatic relations in 1997, the Knesset requested that Tudjman not visit the Jewish state. In the end, Croatia sent its moderate Western-oriented foreign minister, Mate Granic, in Tudjman's place. Zagreb's small

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel completes latest pullback

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is expected to decide soon whether lands near Jerusalem will be included in the next transfer of West Bank lands, to be carried out Jan. 20.

On Thursday, meanwhile, Israel completed its latest withdrawal from portions of the region. The redeployment involved Arab villages around Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus.

### Report: Levy won't be president

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister David Levy reportedly agreed that Levy will not seek the presidency if Ezer Weizman resigns. Sources close to Barak said he preferred having Levy remain in his current position at what was termed a "sensitive and fateful" point in the peace process.

Weizman has come under pressure to resign after admitting that he accepted cash gifts totaling nearly \$500,000 from a French millionaire friend. In the Knesset, legislators rejected motions that Weizman step down.

### Chinese leader to visit Israel

Chinese President Jiang Zemin is due to visit Israel this spring, according to the daily Ha'aretz. Israeli-Chinese defense ties are expected to be high on the agenda, along with Israeli concern over technological and military aid provided by Beijing to Iran.

### Army may change rations

The canned beef and halvah that were staples of Israeli army field rations for nearly half a century may soon be a thing of the past. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that army officials are considering switching to U.S.-manufactured rations.

Not everyone is pleased with the prospect. The paper quoted some Israeli army test tasters as describing the new rations as lacking salt, not being spicy enough and containing skimpy portions of beef.



## Daily News Bulletin

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Jewish community is not sad to see Tadjman gone.

"He was a revisionist," Goldstein said of Tadjman, adding that the former president promoted "Croatia-centrism" under which all minorities were pushed to the margins. "We were equal in rights, but not in value."

Slaven Letica, a former Tadjman advisor who became a prominent critic of the regime, dismissed the claim that Tadjman disliked Jews.

"He was poorly educated, not anti-Semitic," said Letica.

"He was fascinated with the Bible and Jews as intellectuals," said Letica, who is not Jewish.

The Jewish Community of Zagreb, which numbers about 1,500, had not taken an official position on the elections, said Dean Friedrich, secretary-general of the community.

Friedrich said that Croatia's Jewish community has always had a good relationship with Croatian governments.

Because Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito broke with Stalin after World War II, Yugoslavia was never firmly part of the Soviet bloc and consequently did not have the same anti-religious attitude as much of the bloc, Friedrich explained. He pointed out that the Jewish community center has been housed in the same building since before the war.

"The community here was always open to the public," he said.

Historian Goldstein said the elections are part of the process of depoliticizing Jews and Judaism in Croatia after a year that saw the conviction of a concentration camp commander.

In October 1999, Dinko Sakic, 78, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his crimes as commander of the Jasenovac camp during World War II.

Such issues are behind Croatia now, Goldstein said.

Victorious politicians "Budisa and Racan are not speaking about the past. They want to speak about the future," he said.

"Jews are not a political issue any more," Goldstein said. "We are part of the normal world." □

## Arab American leader speaks out against cartoon in Palestinian paper

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — James Zogby, the president of the Arab American Institute in Washington, has condemned an anti-Jewish caricature that appeared alongside an essay he wrote in the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority.

The caricature in the Dec. 28 issue of the daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadida showed an old man, labeled "20th Century," and a young man, labeled "21st Century."

Between them stands a short Jew, with a hooked nose, skullcap and Star of David, who is labeled "The disease of the century." The layout of the page makes the cartoon seem part of Zogby's essay on "Millennium Madness."

On Tuesday, Zogby wrote a letter to the newspaper's editor in which he said he is "very deeply disturbed to see the cartoon you chose to run with my article."

"It is upsetting that the cartoon features an ugly anti-Jewish caricature," he wrote.

"Since such anti-Semitic cartoons are harmful both to the Jewish people and also to the Palestinian and Arab people, I urge you to refrain from including such material in your paper in the future."

Zogby was alerted to the cartoon's publication by Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the associate dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, who became aware of the cartoon on the day it was published and faxed a copy to Zogby.

In the wake of Zogby's letter to the editor of the Palestinian paper, Cooper issued a statement applauding his action.

"We welcome Mr. Zogby's unequivocal denunciation of the cartoon and we hope that this will encourage Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and other Palestinian media outlets to desist from their ongoing campaign to delegitimize Israel and the Jewish people," the statement said. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Congressman criticizes Baltics

A U.S. congressman criticized Latvia and Lithuania for failing to prosecute alleged Nazi war criminals. U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor serving in Congress, said during a two-day visit to the region that the Baltic republics have not kept their promises to bring Nazis to justice.

Speaking Wednesday in the Latvian capital of Riga, Lantos called on Latvia to request the extradition of Konrad Kalejs, a Latvian-born Australian citizen who is accused of aiding in the slaughter of thousands of Jews during World War II. On Thursday, Kalejs left Britain for Australia.

### Papon rushed to hospital

Convicted Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon was rushed from prison to a hospital after suffering from heart trouble, according to the French Justice Ministry. Papon, 89, who has a history of cardiac illness, entered a hospital Wednesday night after complaining of a rapid heartbeat.

He has been in jail since October, when he began serving a 10-year sentence for crimes against humanity after he was found guilty of helping deport some 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps. Papon is seeking a presidential pardon on medical grounds.

### German Jewish post up for grabs

The executive board of the German Jewish community plans to meet Sunday to choose a new leader. The candidates seeking to succeed Ignatz Bubis, who died in August after presiding over the Central Council of Jews in Germany for eight years, are Paul Spiegel, a Dusseldorf theatrical agent, and Charlotte Knobloch, the leader of Munich's Jewish community.

### Sweden vows probe of Nazi links

Sweden's prime minister vowed to investigate his country's wartime links to Nazi Germany. Goran Persson's promise came after a television documentary revealed that at least 260 Swedes were members of Hitler's SS. Five of the nation's political parties have called for a probe to uncover neutral Sweden's ties with Nazi Germany before the country hosts an international conference on the Holocaust on Jan. 26-28 in Stockholm.

### 'Schindler's List' tops poll

A group of film critics voted "Schindler's List" the top film of the 1990s.

Director Steven Spielberg's 1993 film about businessman Oskar Schindler's efforts to save Jews during World War II was followed on the Broadcast Film Critics Association's top 10 list by Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" at No. 2.

## Israeli girl, whose need for lung sparked international support, dies

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Israeli girl who received a lung transplant from a British man who had read of her plight in his local Jewish paper died over the weekend.

Although the transplant was completed successfully in November, Lisa Ostrovsky, a 10-year-old who suffered from cystic fibrosis, died Saturday of multiple postoperative complications, officials at St. Louis Children's Hospital, where the procedure took place, said in a statement.

A funeral was scheduled for Wednesday at Ostrovsky's home, Kibbutz Ammiad, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Ostrovsky's plight attracted worldwide attention last fall when her father, Ilia, launched a global e-mail campaign requesting funds for the operation, which could not be performed in the Jewish state and was only partially covered by the family's health insurance.

Ron Johnson, a 48-year-old British janitor offered his lung lobes after an article on Lisa's search for a donor ran in the London Jewish News.

"Even though I am not Jewish, I am interested in the Jewish community," he told JTA in a November interview.

"When I read Ostrovsky's story, I knew I couldn't help financially but I realized I could donate my lung," he added, paraphrasing a talmudic saying that to save a life is akin to saving a world.

Notified of Ostrovsky's death, Johnson said he was "terribly saddened."

"I gave her a part of my lung. Part of my heart has gone with her and will be with her forever."

Before it ran in the London Jewish News, Ostrovsky's campaign for his daughter also attracted the attention of Rabbi Kalman Packouz of Aish HaTorah and Rabbi Levi Cunin, director of the Chabad Center in Malibu, Calif.

They broadcast Ostrovsky's plight on their own e-mail lists to more than 210,000 people.

Individuals in North America set up Web sites and grass-roots fund-raising campaigns on Ostrovsky's behalf.

Those efforts generated more than \$160,000 in Israel, the United States and Canada and a pledge by one donor to cover the balance of funds not raised elsewhere.

In addition to Johnson, 20 people from around the world offered to serve as lung donors.

"We leave the United States with heavy hearts and great sadness," Ilia Ostrovsky said shortly after his daughter's death.

"But we also leave overwhelmed by the love and support that we have received from thousands of people of all faiths across the world."

Cystic fibrosis is a congenital childhood disorder in which the glands of the body secrete fluids that are abnormally sticky and may cause obstruction of the lungs, intestines and, more rarely, the liver.

Transplant is a last resort.

Of a total of 233 pediatric lung and heart-lung transplants performed at St. Louis Children's Hospital since 1990 — including 29 living-donor lung transplants — the overall one-year survival rate is 77 percent, according to the hospital.

The longest-surviving pediatric lung transplant patient had the surgery eight years ago. □

## Germany pledges to Auschwitz museum

NEW YORK (JTA) — Germany has pledged \$5 million for the upkeep of Poland's Auschwitz-Birkenau museum, according to a government spokesman.

Part of the money will also be used for exhibits at the museum, which commemorates some 1.5 million people, mostly Jews, who perished at Auschwitz during World War II, the spokesman added Tuesday. □

**TEN YEARS AFTER THE WALL****Jewish center near Auschwitz will show how the victims lived***By Ruth E. Gruber*

OSWIECIM, Poland (JTA) — On a rainy afternoon this fall, Roman Catholic clergy and Polish, U.S. and Israeli officials joined Holocaust survivors and other Jews in an emotional ceremony that reflected changing attitudes toward Auschwitz and its legacy.

It was the formal ground-breaking for the restoration of the only surviving synagogue in Oswiecim, the town in southern Poland near the Auschwitz death camp — and the creation there of a Jewish study, prayer and information center.

Participants, including local Bishop Tadeusz Rakoczy, former speaker of the Knesset and Holocaust survivor Shevach Weiss, and visiting American Jews, donned souvenir hardhats — and buried stones from Jerusalem in a corner of the sanctuary.

Joseph Hennenberg, a Holocaust survivor who was born in Oswiecim and now lives in the United States, sounded the shofar and, facing the east wall where the Ark will be reinstalled, the group joined in the Kaddish and other prayers.

The \$10 million project was conceived and sponsored by the New York-based Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, founded in 1995 by philanthropist and businessman Fred Schwartz.

The project's aim is to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and mourn their loss — not by showing how they died, but how they lived, focusing on the life, culture and history of prewar Jewish Oswiecim as a microcosm of destroyed European Jewry. More importantly, perhaps, the center hopes to establish itself as a positive, living Jewish presence near the place that is the world's biggest Jewish cemetery and the ultimate symbol of the Holocaust.

"Out of more than 40 religious institutions in the Auschwitz area, there is no Jewish institution," said Daniel Eisenstadt, executive director of the foundation.

"There is neither a center dedicated to studying Jewish life nor a synagogue where Jewish visitors can pray and mourn," he said.

To this end, the Chevra Lomdei Mishnaot synagogue will be restored to how it looked in the 1930s, when the town's 7,000 Jews made up more than half of the local population and Oswiecim was widely known among Jews by its Yiddish name, Oshpitsin. Last summer the synagogue already received a Torah, donated by a congregation on Long Island, in a joyous ceremony.

In the building next door to the synagogue, a study center will include seminar rooms, a library, a memorial wall, historic photos and an auditorium. There will also be kosher eating facilities.

"We want to represent Jewish life here before the Shoah, not the anonymity of mass death," said Schwartz.

Michael Lewan, chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, which has supported the project, said, "The synagogue is a testament to those vibrant souls who prayed, studied, sang and danced within its walls."

Creating a center for Jewish life, education and prayer at Oswiecim represents a sea change in Jewish attitudes toward Auschwitz, a change that Eisenstadt says is increasingly necessary as both the Shoah and the destroyed prewar Jewish world recede further into history.

At least 1.5 million people, 90 percent of them Jews, were

killed at Auschwitz. The Auschwitz I camp and nearby Birkenau, or Auschwitz II, were dedicated as a museum and memorial soon after the end of the war. Hundreds of thousands of people — Jews as well as non-Jews — visit each year, to pay homage to the dead and to learn about the mechanism of the Nazis' "Final Solution."

"Because of the immensity of the horror and the depth of the pain, previous generations have primarily visited Auschwitz to express grief," Eisenstadt told JTA. "While that process continues, current and future generations that have had less direct contact with the 'world that was' before Auschwitz want to bridge the gap of the Holocaust and understand the Jewish victims not as victims but as people; as fathers and mothers, as teachers, merchants and scholars."

Indeed, by the time the center is expected to open next Rosh Hashanah, World War II will have been over for more than 55 years. Today's teen-agers already are removed from the Shoah by three or four generations. Eyewitnesses to the horrors, and to the prewar Jewish experience, are fading from the scene.

The function of the center, Eisenstadt said, will help people come to terms with past tragedy, placing it into the sweep of history and incorporating the experience into life.

Creating a center for Jewish life and education can also, organizers hope, fulfill other positive functions. While for most of the world, Auschwitz has grown to be the chief symbol of the Shoah, Poland's postwar Communist regime made Auschwitz the chief symbol of Polish suffering under the Nazis and all but ignored the fact that most of its victims were Jews.

In the decade since the fall of communism, much has been done to rectify this. But, particularly between Jews and Polish Catholics, Auschwitz still remains a bitterly emotional lightning rod for controversy over conflicting memory and commemoration.

Auschwitz has also taken on other, more universal symbolism, becoming for many the utmost symbol of evil in general. In this context, a German Protestant organization and the Roman Catholic Church have both set up centers near the death camp aimed at fostering dialogue and reconciliation among religions and peoples.

Education will be a major emphasis, Eisenstadt said.

"Because the name of the synagogue means Friends of the Study of the Mishnah, we thought it appropriate to design a Mishnah study program under which visitors would be given the opportunity to respond to Auschwitz in both a defiant and affirmative way," he said. "By doing what Jews did in the synagogue before the Holocaust and studying a mishnah, visitors could make the statement that Jewish learning continues."

The synagogue, a small, compact building with arched windows, was built around 1900 and — as one of about a dozen prewar synagogues in Oswiecim — was used until 1939.

The Nazis brought thousands of Jews to the synagogue before they deported them to ghettos in 1941. After World War II, the Communists seized the synagogue, which was used for decades as a warehouse. In March 1998, it became the first building returned to the Jewish community under Poland's restitution law.

Polish Jews have welcomed the project, as have Polish officials, who are eager to improve Poland's image.

"Everybody, from the Polish government to the U.S. ambassador, to Polish Jews to the Polish church is happy that it is possible to do something constructive at Auschwitz," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a local Jewish leader and Warsaw consultant for the American Jewish Committee. □