



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 78, No. 67

Friday, April 7, 2000

83rd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Police: Don't charge Weizman

Israeli police recommended that no charges be filed against Israeli President Ezer Weizman. Investigators said there is insufficient evidence to charge Weizman with taking bribes for receiving cash gifts from a French millionaire friend while serving as a Knesset member and Cabinet minister.

Police said there is evidence to charge Weizman with breach of public trust, but the statute of limitations has expired.

Lawmaker may block Israel aid

A U.S. congressman said he plans to block \$250 million in aid to Israel unless the Jewish state cancels sales of early-warning airborne radar systems to China.

"The Defense Department needs some leverage," Sonny Callahan (R-Ala.) said at a hearing Thursday of the House appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations. [Page 4]

Reform file circumcision petition

Israel's Reform movement petitioned the High Court of Justice to order the minister of health to change a policy allowing only Orthodox-performed circumcisions in hospitals, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported.

The petition was filed on behalf of a clinic that employs doctors willing to perform circumcisions for individuals who desire a non-Orthodox ceremony or who require circumcision for medical reasons.

Russian Jews rally for 'Iran 13'

About 200 Russians rallied in Moscow for the release of 13 Iranian Jews slated to be tried later this month for spying. Thursday's protesters outside the Iranian Embassy carried signs reading "Let My People Go" and "Free the Jewish Hostages."

Vladimir Goussinsky, president of the Russian Jewish Congress, met with the Iranian ambassador but did not receive an answer to his request for a visa to go to Iran.

Professor fired for Shoah denial

A Polish professor found guilty last year of Holocaust denial was fired from his university and banned from teaching elsewhere in Poland for the next three years. [Page 4]

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Cultural, affiliated and dot-com Jews: They all seek a meaningful connection

By Howard Lovy

WASHINGTON (JTA) — All right, already. Enough with the Kabbalah, klezmer and "Kosher Sex."

The trendy trappings of the new "cultural Judaism" are fun, but they cannot stand alone without another important element: connection.

And it's a search for connection that ties together young Jewish activists with the unaffiliated — about whom so much has been written and for whom so much money is being spent.

This search for connection was the common element between both the core group of dedicated young Jewish leaders and unaffiliated spiritual seekers at a recent United Jewish Communities Young Leadership Conference in Washington. A singles scene mingled with political activism, last month's conference was where the established American Jewish leadership continued its attempt to speak the language of the young.

The stakes, as most involved American Jews have memorized by now as a mantra, are nothing less than the rescue of American Jewry from assimilation, intermarriage and apathy.

Conversations with the future American Jewish leaders at the conference, and with those on the fringes of Judaism, uncovered one common desire — to connect their personal philosophies and lifestyles with their spiritual lives.

What they really want, they say, is to be connected with Judaism in a meaningful way. Some rediscover the wheel, going the scenic route by way of Eastern religions, "eco-Zionism," "cultural Judaism" and then back to the Judaism of their grandparents, but reshaping it to fit their needs.

For many, Jewish rituals, music, synagogue services, methods of raising money, even the way Jewish singles meet one another, will never be the same again.

To Stephen Solender, president and CEO of United Jewish Communities, the organized community's central fund-raising and social service organization, the Jewish communal world needs to continue its discovery of what motivates younger Jews to feel connected, and open up the system to them.

"Their enthusiasm is contagious," Solender told JTA.

He added that it's up to the established leadership to channel that enthusiasm and ensure they become leaders in their local communities and integrate them into the UJC system.

What can unify the younger generation of Jews, Solender said, is the "collective satisfaction of being Jewish."

That can be achieved, he said, through shared cultural experiences spurred on in part by the Jewish leadership.

These are individuals who grew up in a society where no doors were closed to them, with little anti-Semitism, he said, and their identity as Jews are both defined and threatened not by defense against attacks from the outside, but from cultural enthusiasm and constant questioning from within.

Almost universally, negative experiences in synagogues and supplementary religious education seems to have been the source of their rebellion.

Linda Freedman of Los Angeles used to go AWOL from Hebrew school when she was growing up.

But now that Friedman is in her late 30s, she is exploring Judaism again because,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Generals call withdrawal a trap

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is leading the country into a trap with his plan for a unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon, a group of generals was quoted as telling the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*. The generals said the withdrawal would leave Israel's northern towns open to attacks by armed groups in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Lebanon warned of cross-border raids by Palestinian groups after an Israel withdrawal. In a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Lebanese President Emile Lahoud also said U.N. troops currently in Lebanon would need to help disarm the groups.

Settlers forced from hilltop

Israeli troops removed several dozen Jewish settlers who had returned to a West Bank hilltop from which they had been forcibly evacuated several months ago. The settlers did not resist their latest removal from Maon Farm, but said the army had agreed to let them continue agricultural activities in the area, which is an Israel Defense Force firing zone.

The IDF denied any agreement was reached.

Syria backs Palestinian groups

Syria renewed its support for Damascus-based Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process, according to one of the groups.

A spokesman for the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine — General Command told Reuters that Syria's vice president expressed the support when he met Wednesday with the group's leader, George Habash.

Earthquake shakes Eilat

A moderate earthquake shook Eilat, but there were no reports of injuries or damage. The epicenter of the quake was in the Gulf of Aqaba, about 55 miles south of Eilat and nearby Aqaba in Jordan.



Daily News Bulletin

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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.
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after many years studying other cultures, she can understand her own faith in a deeper way.

Like many, she's not looking to become more observant, simply more knowledgeable.

Although her journey of Jewish rediscovery has been gradual, what abruptly brought her to think about Jewish political activism was last summer's shooting at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in suburban Los Angeles, when a white supremacist opened fire on children attending a Jewish day camp.

She realized that there is a lot of work that needs to be done that doesn't involve her intense job at an Internet company. She sees it as an integral part of her identity as a Jew to fight for things like stronger hate-crimes legislation.

Judaism "is a part of who you are, it's your essence, who you belong to, but not to the exclusion of being part of humanity," Freedman says.

Connection is also what the latest Jewish phenomenon is all about: the explosion of Jewish dot-coms.

"A lot of people are looking for a connection with the Jewish community and not finding it," says Harry Nelson, 32, CEO of allthingsjewish.com, an e-commerce site.

That, he says, is where the Internet has successfully stepped in, to help younger Jews stay connected with Judaism outside the federation and synagogue world, which has little meaning to them.

"What do they want?" asks Nelson of Washington. "They want more passion in their Judaism. They don't want a bloodless Judaism. They want a Judaism of song and dance."

Of course, they also want someone with whom to share their newfound Jewish passion.

"Virtually every unmarried Jewish person I meet is using a dating site," Nelson says.

Although many may not admit it.

At a packed session on Jewish singles, panelist Jory Rozner, founder and CEO of the Jewish portal and dating site Zipple.com, asked for a show of hands on how many have placed or answered an online Jewish personal ad.

Some nervously looked around the room to see if it was safe for them to raise their hands.

"Oh, I know you, you are all bagelboy@aol.com," said Rozner, prompting knowing laughter.

Philip Raclyn, 46, who lives in the New York area, isn't ashamed of his online life.

Not only is he the president of JMates.com, he's also a client. He chats with Jewish women online and travels to far-flung parts of the world just to meet them, in case they're "the one."

Aside from its usefulness as a global singles bar, the Internet, he says, is what is making the Jewish community a community again.

The previous generation became dispersed, and lost their Judaism along the way, he says, adding that with the Internet, "all of a sudden, we really are a tribe again, and I'm a part of it."

The problem, says Rozner, is that many have only a vague notion of what it means to be a member of that tribe. Many call themselves cultural Jews, but have little knowledge of Jewish culture.

She started Zipple because she thought it would be a cool way for Jews worldwide to stay connected.

She soon learned that the Internet is more than just about dating, but about gaining inspiration and ideas from the way other Jews express their Judaism.

But Rabbi Jack Moline, spiritual leader of Congregation Agudas Achim in Alexandria, Va., warned that too much shopping around on the real or virtual worlds will ultimately remain unsatisfying.

If you think of the search for a Jewish mate as a salad bar — a little of this and a little of that — all you get is other people's germs, Moline said.

"But rabbi," complained one delegate at a singles-related forum here, "why do I make bad choices?"

Moline replied, "Because you're spending too much time online." □

JEWISH WORLD

Austrian party apologizes for past

The leader of Austria's Social Democrats acknowledged that his party erred in seeking the support of former Nazis in its postwar drive to become the nation's most powerful political force.

Alfred Gusenbauer also apologized to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal for past accusations by his party that Wiesenthal, who lost family members during the Holocaust, collaborated with the Gestapo.

Reps back Magen David Adom

Two members of the U.S. House International Relations Committee introduced a resolution calling for the admittance of Israel's Magen David Adom Society as a full member of the Red Cross.

Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman (R-N.Y.), committee chairman, and Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), said Wednesday the agency is a victim of politics and should be allowed to use the Star of David as its symbol.

USAID ups help to Palestinians

The U.S. Agency for International Development increased aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza this year to \$85 million from \$75 million.

A USAID official said Thursday the aid will go to improve the quality of life for Palestinians, including bringing water to up to 70 more West Bank villages.

Dutch insurers to post names

Dutch insurance investigators said they found the names of 750 Holocaust victims whose heirs have yet to receive unpaid life insurance claims.

The Dutch Insurance Association added that it plans to publish the list Friday on the Internet at www.stichting-sjoo.nl so that relatives can file claims. Earlier this week, the association, which includes 300 members, said it had submitted a proposal to join an international commission looking into unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims.

Iran allows rock concert

Iranian officials allowed the first public rock performance since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The performance, tame by Western standards, took place at an art school in Tehran. Government officials were present at the performance, which they canceled after two songs.

French film tops Web list

A French film about three elderly Jewish women searching for new lives 50 years after the Holocaust was named the best Jewish feature of 1999 by a Jewish online film archive. In addition to "Voyages," JewishFilm.com gave "Herr Zwilling and Frau Zuckermann," a film about a conversation between two elderly survivors, its best documentary award.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Jewish funders debate focus of their philanthropic priorities

By Mark J. Joffe

PHOENIX (JTA) — When more than 200 Jewish philanthropists and foundation professionals gathered here this week, they got a challenge they might not have expected.

Instead of praising their work, one of the first speakers to address the 10th national conference of the Jewish Funders Network questioned the priorities of the conference participants.

"There are so many causes supported by Jews and Jewish organizations without thought or reference to Judaism," Jack Wertheimer, provost of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, told the group.

"The question 'What is a Jewish cause?' needs to be weighed carefully."

The conference organizers apparently agree, because they chose as this year's theme: "Saving the Whales: Is it Jewish Funding?"

For Wertheimer, the answer to that question is a resounding "no." He decried the fact that many Jewish foundations and private funders are supporting non-Jewish causes, at the expense of Jewish ones, in the pursuit of tikkun olam, or repairing the world.

"Increasing numbers of wealthy Jews have decided that the real needs lie elsewhere," he said, quoting a recent study which found that 70 to 90 percent of the grants provided by Jewish family foundations go to non-Jewish causes, at a time, he said, when "a great many Jewish institutions teeter on the brink of bankruptcy."

"In the process of gaining the world we are losing ourselves," he warned. "For those of us concerned about the future of the Jewish community, this is a disaster."

"Are funders acting as responsible Jews?" he asked. "I say no!"

"I ask you to reconsider your priorities," he implored his listeners.

His speech clearly rattled some of those listeners, who included a wide range of funders, from individual donors to representatives of large foundations.

But those who might have been offended by Wertheimer's remarks got some reassurance from the next speaker at the conference, Rabbi David Saperstein.

Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said he agreed with Wertheimer that not enough Jewish money was going to Jewish causes. But he passionately defended the importance of supporting non-Jewish causes as well.

Acting on "universal concerns is in our interests," he said. "We cannot truly be for ourselves without being for others."

Moreover, Saperstein argued that Jewish funders do not have to support one at the expense of the other. "I don't believe it has to be a choice," he said. "We have the wealth, the wherewithal and the influence to do both."

Indeed most of the funders attending the Phoenix conference support a vast array of Jewish causes — from a Yiddish festival in Los Angeles to a Jewish day school in Warsaw. And the conference itself was geared to helping those funders be responsible and effective in their funding choices.

"We are about promoting strategic philanthropy," said Evan Mendelson, JFN's executive director.

The gathering included plenary sessions, workshops and other "breakout" meetings on such topics as "Education: Funding Strategies That Work," "Partners Without Borders: Collaborative Funding Internationally," and "Supporting the Next Generation of Jewish Innovators."

But while many of the sessions focused on supporting the types of Jewish causes that Wertheimer feels need more attention, others dealt with the more universal causes that Saperstein said deserve Jewish support too. They included sessions on "Funding Advocacy: Strategies for Changing Public Policy on a Living Wage and Gun Control" and "Funding as a Global Citizen: Environmental Challenges at Home and Abroad."

Jeffrey Dekro, president of the Shefa Fund, which promotes Jewish social responsibility, argued during a question-and-answer session following Wertheimer's and Saperstein's remarks, that causes such as these are, in fact, Jewish interests, too.

As he put it: "Is clean air and clean water something Jews can do without?" □

NEWS ANALYSIS**Israeli arms sale to China sparks harsh words, but uncertain impact***By Sharon Samber*

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. opposition to Israel's sale of advanced radar systems to China is clear, but the effect of this bump in the usually smooth relations between the United States and Israel remains to be seen.

Some analysts believe the arms sales would make it difficult to maintain support for Israel in Congress, where there are strong views about China's policies on Taiwan, trade and human rights.

Others say that those who do not like Israel will attempt to use this incident to damage U.S.-Israel relations.

"Israel underestimated how much the U.S. would care about this," said David Schenker, a research fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank.

During a visit to Israel on Monday, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen made very clear how much the United States cares about Israel's plans to sell conventional and high technology weapons to China. Calling the move "counterproductive," Cohen said at a news conference in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at his side: "The United States does not support the sale of this type of technology to China because of the potential of changing the balance in that region, with the tensions running high as they are between China and Taiwan."

Barak said he would take the U.S. concerns into account, but Israel still intends to proceed with the deal.

"We are aware of the sensitivity in the United States with regard to China," Barak said. But noting the economic importance of the deal, he said, "We are, of course, aware of our commitments in the contracts that we signed."

Evidence of U.S. concern over the sales came again Wednesday, when the chairman of the U.S. House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee said Israel must provide Congress with a detailed summary of the military information the Jewish state sold to China.

"To do anything less would invite critics of our assistance to Israel to use this as a wedge, and ultimately could seriously erode the very favorable relations" between the United States and Israel, Rep. Sonny Callahan (R-Ala.) told JTA.

Callahan said he plans to raise the issue at a hearing with administration officials regarding security assistance to Israel.

The concerns of both the administration and members of Congress are being taken "extremely seriously" in Israel, says Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

He stressed that Israel is not passing American technology to China, which would violate Israeli-U.S. agreements.

Asked about the U.S. reaction to the deal, Regev said, "Even the closest of allies don't have identical positions on every issue."

Indeed, Israel is seeking to enhance relations with China, which were established in 1997, for both political and economic reasons. Israel sees China as an important market not only for arms, but other goods as well.

In fact, China's president, Jiang Zemin, is scheduled to make an official visit to the Jewish state next week.

Some see the hype about the deal as hypocritical. The arms sale, for a reported \$230 million, was announced in November, and

the United States has been aware of the contract for years, sources say. Attempts to sell — or actual sales of — very similar technology to China were made by NATO allies, such as Britain, France, and Italy, according to an official with a pro-Israel group.

In addition, various American companies sell dual-use high technology items like supercomputers to Beijing, and the United States is actively seeking to restore its own military ties with China, the official said. Still, the issue remains sensitive.

Israel's expanding military relationship with China could hurt Israeli-U.S. relations, especially as Israel is seeking to negotiate a defense treaty with the United States, a House staffer said.

The staffer, who asked not to be identified, also said that a result of this deal, some members of Congress may question Israel's trustworthiness as Israel seeks advanced technologies from the United States.

"Many senior members of the national security committees will not consider these requests favorably," the staffer said.

Whether or not there will be an effect on actual foreign aid to Israel is not yet clear, since the process to secure foreign aid for next year has not begun.

State Department spokesman James Rubin said Monday that as far as he knew, there are no plans for the United States to cut Israel's foreign aid or to link it to an Israeli request for an estimated \$17 billion military aid package that would accompany any possible peace deal with Syria.

"On the other hand, it's fair to say that if Israel were not to respond to our concerns," Rubin said, "it would have some effect. "Precisely what, I'm not prepared to speculate," Rubin said. □

Professor who denied Holocaust can't teach in Poland for 3 years*By Ruth E. Gruber*

BUDAPEST (JTA) — A Polish professor convicted last year of Holocaust denial was fired from his university and banned from teaching elsewhere in Poland for the next three years.

The state-run University of Opole said Dariusz Ratajczak had violated ethical standards with the publication of his book "Dangerous Topics," in which he wrote sympathetically about published material that denies the Holocaust occurred.

Ratajczak, 37, said he would appeal the decision.

Ratajczak had already been suspended from his teaching post at Opole last spring following protests over the book.

Prosecutors opened an investigation and Ratajczak went on trial for violating a new law banning the denial of Nazi and Communist-era hate crimes.

In December, a court in Opole found him guilty of spreading revisionism, but did not punish him, saying the limited distribution of the book did not prove it to be a "social threat." The court said Ratajczak had criticized the view of Holocaust revisionists in a second edition of the book.

"It was the first trial of an 'Auschwitz lie' case in Poland and the first use of the new law that makes it possible to punish for such crimes," said Stanislaw Krajewski, Poland consultant of the American Jewish Committee.

Ratajczak has consistently argued that his book did not endorse Holocaust denial but simply reported the views of Holocaust deniers. □