



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Weizman may quit early**

Israel's president said he may resign before his term ends in 2003.

Ezer Weizman said Sunday he will decide after the attorney general issues a report on cash gifts he received several years ago from a French millionaire friend.

The police had recommended that no charges be brought, but only because the statute of limitations had expired on two of the allegations.

### **Forward's editor on the way out**

The editor of the New York-based Forward newspaper is likely to be ousted by the board that owns half of the Jewish weekly, according to a source close to the paper.

The Forward Association, which has its roots in the labor movement, has long been at odds with Seth Lipsky.

Lipsky is a self-described neoconservative.

It was unclear if a specific incident heightened tensions, or when Lipsky's forced resignation would take place.

### **Barak downplays expectations**

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak downplayed any likelihood that his meeting with President Clinton in Washington on Tuesday would result in dramatic breakthroughs with either Syria or the Palestinian Authority.

Barak's office said he and Clinton are expected to discuss Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which resumed last Friday in Washington, and the premier's plan to withdraw Israeli troops from southern Lebanon by July. [Page 4]

### **UJC wants more overseas aid**

Officials of the United Jewish Communities say the need to help Jews abroad has increased this year and are asking federations to send at least 105 percent of what they gave last year for overseas needs.

The call came as representatives from more than 100 federations gathered in Washington to resolve outstanding governance issues in their newly created umbrella organization.

During the meeting, the officials announced that they had raised \$882 million in their annual campaign last year and \$935 million in endowment funds.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### **German historian preserves letters telling of Nazi brutality**

By Allison Linn

BERLIN (JTA) — They came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe.

Often they traveled in trains without windows to undisclosed locations in a country that was at war with their own and whose people did not speak their language.

The millions of laborers forced into service to fuel the Third Reich's war machine worked 12- to 16-hour shifts for four years, sometimes without more than one meal a day.

They were scattered into thousands of bare-bones camps throughout Germany. If they were paid, it was so pitifully little that it was a bitter joke.

The slave laborers were concentration camp prisoners whom the Nazis sought to work to death.

The forced laborers, imported from Eastern European nations to free up Germans to serve in the army, worked under better conditions.

As politicians, lawyers and industrial giants have held drawn-out and often bitter negotiations over how many billions of dollars their work — and Germany's legal immunity from future lawsuits — is worth, the actual victims of Nazi-era forced and slave labor have remained mostly on the sidelines.

The survivors have, in fact, been so far away from the discussion that fund administrators are now wondering how to find the former laborers to tell them that, more than half a century later, they will receive \$2,500 to \$7,500 for their work during the war.

Perhaps they should start by talking to Gisela Wenzel.

For years the Berlin-based historian has been gathering letters from former forced and slave laborers.

Most of the survivors, who number somewhere between 800,000 and 2 million, are non-Jews from Eastern Europe.

As a result of decades of Communist rule in their native countries, many of them had never really talked about their war experience before they received a letter from Wenzel.

Especially in the Soviet Union, Wenzel says, "this was a taboo topic that they forgot and repressed."

Wenzel's organization, the sporadically funded, nonprofit Berlin History Workshop, first began investigating the fate of forced and slave laborers after construction workers renovating an area of Berlin came across the last fully intact labor camp in the city.

Wenzel organized an exhibit at the sparse structure and then began the letter-writing campaign.

Five years later, she has heard from approximately 380 Eastern Europeans. A producer at the German television network ARD has just begun work on a film about the letters.

The letters are full of details: everything from the stations on the subway route they traveled to the exact hours of the shifts they worked and the names of their supervisors.

More than 50 years later, their memories are still remarkably strong: one man recalls exactly how much money he made for his years of service (approximately \$90), another woman remembers the names of her co-workers and still another recalls the

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Syria shifts policy on withdrawal

In an apparent policy shift, Syria said it would welcome a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

After meeting in Cairo on Saturday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa said a withdrawal would mean that the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah was successful in defeating Israel.

### Wagner decision irks survivors

Holocaust survivors in Israel criticized a decision by the Israel Symphony Orchestra to play music by the German composer Richard Wagner during a performance in October.

In 1991, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra planned to perform a piece by Hitler's favorite composer.

But the orchestra reversed the decision after subscribers protested.

### Family remark enrages Orthodox

Fervently Orthodox lawmakers in Israel blasted the justice minister for saying large families are not a "blessing," but a burden on society.

Yossi Beilin was quoted by the Israeli daily Ha'aretz as saying parents having as many as 15 to 17 children frequently do not have the money to take care of them.

Secular legislators have called for reducing the benefits granted to parents for each additional child.

### Mandela: Peace Clinton's football

Former South African president Nelson Mandela criticized President Clinton as using the Middle East peace process as a "political football."

Addressing British Jewish leaders in London on April 5, Mandela said he had told Clinton: "You Western powers have failed. The perception is that your interest lies not in peace but in having the honor of bringing it about."



## Daily News Bulletin

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bloody hand-prints on the wall of the jail where she was held after she tried to escape.

Other memories are kinder: of better-hearted German co-workers who gave them Christmas presents and treated them humanely, of friendships and even marriages that were formed in those years and that still exist today.

They are almost all handwritten, some with a childish hand that suggests the work of a grandchild. Often, Wenzel remarked, the words sit so tightly together on the page "that you can tell how hard it is to afford paper."

To Wenzel, it is not just the physical and emotional damage of the Nazi-era labor practices that is so brutal, but also the professional harm that the survivors endured.

Many of these men and women were pulled from their homes in their late teens, and returned with no education. Now, she says, pulling her clenched fists to her chest, they are "bitterly poor." Sometimes, she says, it was a big expense to afford a stamp for the letter they sent.

She says many of the former laborers are living on pensions of \$15 to \$20 a month, and subsisting on what they grow themselves.

For them, the compensation of \$2,500 for forced laborers, who worked for little compensation, and \$7,500 for slave laborers, who were expected to work to death, is a large amount of money.

But, Wenzel says, "The mood is not one of euphoria.

"The feeling is that this came 50 years too late and that there was way too much haggling. It is a huge humiliation."

The recent decision on how much money each of the former laborers will get from the \$5 billion settlement is seen as the last major hurdle in the contentious Nazi-era labor compensation effort.

But the compensation plan, and its accompanying haggling, is still far from a done deal.

German industry, which will split the bill with the German government, has so far only raised about half the money it needs.

Wolfgang Gibowski, a spokesman for the fund, said as many as 2,000 more German firms will have to contribute to reach the \$2.5 billion mark. But he remains confident that they will make it together by this summer.

He said contributions have risen dramatically in the last week, with as many as 30 companies a day pledging support.

As of the end of March, nearly 900 firms had joined, including companies who did not use slave or forced labor.

Gibowski said the sudden rise in contributors came after German industrial associations sent letters to every company in Germany, urging participation.

"Now they know what the fund is, and why it is the duty of German industry to contribute," Gibowski said.

Ford Werke, a subsidiary of the American automaker, last week became the first subsidiary of an American company to publicly give money.

Other American subsidiaries also have contributed, but have not made their names public.

Paul Schinhofen, spokesman for the Cologne, Germany-based subsidiary, said the firm is expected to give approximately \$13 million. During World War II, Ford Werke was seized by the Third Reich and, while under Nazi control, used an estimated 2,000 forced laborers.

"This can be seen as a sort of moral decision, as a way of dealing with the past," he said. □

## Sharansky goes to Ethiopia

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's interior minister has begun a three-day visit to Ethiopia to assess the situation of the Falash Mura and find ways to speed up the process of deciding who is eligible to immigrate to Israel.

Representatives of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and other Jewish organizations accompanied Natan Sharansky.

Prior to the trip, two Israeli legislators returned from Ethiopia and warned that the people waiting to leave are facing hunger and disease. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### WWII diplomatic heroes honored for helping Jews escape Holocaust

By Brianne Korn

#### Bush: 'Iran 13' should get fair trial

The United States "must judge the Iranian regime by its conduct toward" the 13 Jews facing trial later this month on accusations of spying for Israel and the United States, according to Republican presidential contender George W. Bush.

In a letter to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Bush also said the United States should pressure Iran to grant the 13 a fair and open trial.

#### Okla. House backs creationism

The Oklahoma State House unanimously passed a bill requiring public schools to use science textbooks that acknowledge "one God as the creator of human life in the universe."

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, a religious liberty watchdog group, called the legislation "outrageous and unconstitutional" and said it would file a lawsuit.

#### Havel: Don't ban 'Mein Kampf'

Hitler's "Mein Kampf" should not be banned in the Czech Republic, President Vaclav Havel told a group of students.

Havel said the book should be available in libraries for those studying history.

But he added that he did not like the book being sold for profit.

Meanwhile, Czech police are investigating whether Prague publisher Otakar II, which recently published an unabridged Czech translation of the book without commentaries or disclaimers, has broken Czech laws.

#### Russian university vandalized

Vandals painted anti-Semitic graffiti last Friday on the entrance to a university in the Russian city of Pskov.

Some of the graffiti was aimed at Lev Shlosberg, the local leader of the Yabloko Party, who is one of the founders of the Free University.

Yabloko is headed by liberal politician Grigory Yavlinsky, who is the university's rector.

#### Film on intellectuals gets award

A documentary about four of the 20th-century's leading American Jewish intellectuals won a 1999 Peabody Award.

"Arguing the World," which depicts the lives of Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Irving Howe and Irving Kristol, won one of 36 awards given last week to honor distinguished achievement and public service in radio and television.

The filmmaker was given a grant in 1997 by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

NEW YORK (JTA) — When the atrocities of the Holocaust came to light, many unsung heroes remained in the shadows.

In a ceremony at the United Nations on April 3, some rescued Holocaust survivors met their unknown heroes, or their close family members, for the first time since the war. The international community honored government diplomats who risked their careers and lives to save thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi terror.

The meeting took place in a ceremony before the opening of a traveling exhibit to be on display at the United Nations. "Visa for Life: The Righteous Diplomats" was created to honor the actions of scores of diplomats who issued thousands of visas for Jews escaping Nazi terror.

The exhibit includes never-before-seen Holocaust-era photographs and tells the stories of diplomatic rescues.

Attending the ceremony were survivors who escaped to Japan thanks to visas issued by wartime Japanese Consul Chiune Sugihara. Stationed in Kovno, Lithuania, Sugihara issued thousands of visas during the summer of 1940.

"There's a story" that Sugihara's wife "rubbed his hands at night because they hurt from signing all of the visas," said Meryl Fischhoff, daughter of Ben Fischhoff, who received a Sugihara visa.

Fischhoff's father was a student at the Mir Yeshiva in Poland and sailed to Japan on the "Boat of 72," named for the 72 passengers who were denied permission to disembark in Japan. They were sent back to Russia but eventually sailed back to Japan and successfully disembarked.

Sugihara "is a real Righteous Gentile," Meryl Fischhoff said. "He could have been killed as a traitor."

"The visa was the difference between life and death, no question," said Rabbi David Baron, project coordinator for the New York arm of the exhibit. Collectively, he said, these diplomats issued more than 200,000 visas throughout World War II to help Jews escape to friendlier territory, despite clear government prohibitions.

Dr. Sylvia Smoller's family was also able to escape to Japan and then to America because of Sugihara.

"The Jews somehow knew Sugihara was issuing these visas," she said of why her father traveled to the Japanese Consulate. She received visa number 459 out of 2,000, she said. "Everything was sheer luck," Smoller said.

Smoller created an essay contest in honor of her rescuer called, "Sugihara — Do the Right Thing," where high school students submit essays on moral decisions they have had to make.

"I didn't want to be a professional survivor," Smoller said. "It's important to do something to honor Sugihara and make this refugee and rescue experience a living thing." Other diplomats honored are less well-known than Sugihara, though their contributions are none less significant.

"People ask, 'Why would a man from China save Jews in Austria?'"

"If you knew my father, you wouldn't have to ask," said Ho Manli, daughter of Ho Fengshan, China's consul general in Vienna from 1938-1939.

Ho issued innumerable visas to Jews escaping Austria after the 1938 Nazi takeover there. With his help, Jews were able to escape to Shanghai, China — and from there to Palestine and America.

Carl Lutz, consul for Switzerland in Budapest from 1942-1945, is credited with being the largest single issuer of visas during the Holocaust, according to Baron, saving more than 60,000 Jews by inventing the *Schutzbrief*, or protective letter, and by helping to establish 76 safe houses throughout Budapest.

The "Visas for Life" exhibition is a collaborative effort sponsored by international and national Jewish and Holocaust organizations.

As an offshoot of the exhibition, Baron said the History Channel has announced plans to create a program about these diplomats. □

## Expectations remain low for Clinton-Barak meeting

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — One day after President Clinton invited Prime Minister Ehud Barak to meet with him at the White House this week, Barak downplayed any likelihood that the meeting Tuesday would result in breakthroughs with Syria or the Palestinian Authority.

Barak's office said Sunday he and Clinton are expected to discuss Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which resumed last Friday in Washington, and Barak's plan to withdraw Israeli troops from southern Lebanon by July.

The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations entered their second round at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, but with little progress reported.

During a visit to Cairo on Sunday, Arafat said those talks were "just chat" and had made no headway.

The two sides are trying to reach a framework agreement for a peace accord by May, and the full accord by September.

Meanwhile, where the Syrian track is concerned, Barak told his Cabinet on Sunday he is pessimistic that the deadlocked negotiations with Damascus would resume any time soon.

Following the failure of a Geneva summit late last month, when Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad were unable to find a formula for resuming Israeli-Syrian talks, Israel has begun seeking international support for a unilateral pullback from southern Lebanon.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday that Barak was considering whether to seek American aid to help pay for the pullout and the Israeli army's redeployment along the international border.

The paper quoted sources in the Prime Minister's Office as saying U.S. officials had initiated Clinton's summit with Barak out of concern for the stalemated Israeli-Syrian talks and rising tensions surrounding the Lebanon withdrawal.

To punctuate those tensions, Hezbollah gunmen in Lebanon fired a Katyusha rocket into northern Israel. There were no reports of casualties from Sunday's attack.

Israeli-Syrian negotiations broke off in January after Israel refused to commit to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Syria wants a return to the boundary that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War, which would give Damascus the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Israel, which demands full control of what is its most significant water source, suggested trading land elsewhere for the slim strip of shoreline.

Meanwhile, Israel has refused to react officially to a proposal put forward by a British journalist and confidant of Assad to end the deadlocked Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

Patrick Seale's proposal, which he described as a "personal initiative," calls for granting Israel sovereignty over the Sea of Galilee, Syria sovereignty over the northeastern shore and both countries free access to the area.

Barak's top security adviser, Danny Yatom, said it is too early to comment on the idea. But he reiterated Israel's position that it would not turn over control over any portion of the Sea of Galilee.

Foreign Minister David Levy said the only way to resolve the

matter was through direct negotiations with Damascus.

"Peace is made when you sit down and talk face to face. Not through telepathy, not through faxes, and I'll say today, not through a journalist," Levy told Israel Radio. □

## Moscow rally for 'Iran 13' small, but for local Jews, it means a lot

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — A recent rally here to help Iranian Jews may have been small — fewer than 200 people took part — but it didn't lack for symbolism.

"I consider it a historic event. For the first time in many years, Russian Jewry has launched efforts to help" another Diaspora Jewish community, said Pinchas Goldschmidt, Moscow's chief rabbi, one of the organizers of last week's rally.

The protesters stood quietly on a downtown Moscow boulevard outside the Iranian Embassy, carrying signs reading "Let My People Go," "Justice for the 13 Iranian Prisoners" and "Free the Political Prisoners in Iran." The signs were reminiscent of those carried during the 1970s and 1980s by American Jews working to help refuseniks and Zionist activists in the Soviet Union.

The protest attracted a crowd of onlookers drawn by rumors of a possible clash between the demonstrators and Iranian students living in Moscow, but no students showed up.

The Iranian Embassy apparently had decided to downplay the event. It had lodged a protest against the demonstration and tried unsuccessfully to have Russian Jewish Congress President Vladimir Goussinsky cancel it.

Most of the demonstrators were not longtime Jewish activists but young people, some of them teen-agers.

"I came here because I am not indifferent to the fate of my kinsmen in Iran. Our schoolchildren painted the posters and brought them here on their own initiative," said Grigory Lipman, director of Moscow's secular Jewish high school.

Many in the Russian Jewish community believe that their country could use its ties to Iran to play an instrumental role in the fate of the "Iran 13," said Rabbi David Karpov, a Lubavitch leader in Moscow.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told a delegation of visiting American Jews in February that his ministry has been raising the issue with Iranian authorities since June. "We have been including this question on the agenda of practically all Russian-Iranian political contacts," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a letter to Moscow's Jewish community last month.

The RJC, one of Russian Jewry's umbrella organizations, has been pressuring the Iranian Embassy in Moscow to issue visas to Goussinsky, two leading Russian Jewish lawyers and some media people to attend the trial.

Just before the demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy, Goussinsky met with the Iranian ambassador regarding his visa requests, but he did not receive an answer.

But the message of the demonstration was clear to many ordinary Jews in Moscow. "When I saw the demonstration on TV, I was happy to learn that the Jewish community here is at last able to do something other than celebrate Jewish holidays and work for its own benefit," said Nadezhda Korabelnik, 45, a historian at a Moscow museum. □