



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Iranian Jew confesses on TV

One of 13 Iranian Jews being tried on charges of espionage admitted on state television to spying for Israel after receiving training in the Jewish state.

But the lead defense lawyer, Esmail Nasser, denied his clients were guilty. [Page 1]

### Negotiator: Palestine will emerge

Israel's chief negotiator with the Palestinians said a Palestinian state would emerge from negotiations for a final peace accord.

Oded Eran's comments came as the two sides sat down to a second day of talks in the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat.

Meanwhile, Israel's Labor Party is considering a resolution that would make the most far-reaching declaration yet in support of a Palestinian state.

Party leaders are scheduled to meet later this month to consider the declaration, which recognizes a Palestinian right to a state within the framework of a peace accord that takes Israel's essential interests into account.

### State Dept.: Terror moving east

Terrorists are finding a new base in South Asia, according to the U.S. State Department.

Focusing on nations such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, the department's annual report on international terrorism said the eastward shift of terrorist centers occurred after most Middle East governments strengthened their methods of responding to terrorists.

### Israel dismantles Lebanon bases

Israel began tearing down two army outposts in southern Lebanon to prepare for its planned troop withdrawal, an army spokeswoman said.

Soldiers dismantled a communications antenna at one of the outposts and removed ammunition from the other.

### U.S. chides Israel on housing

Israel's decision to build new housing units in a Jerusalem suburb undermines the peace process, the U.S. State Department said in a statement.

The comment regarding Israel's plans at Ma'aleh Adumim was made as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators continued to work in the Israeli resort of Eilat on a blueprint for a final agreement.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Confession of Iranian Jew sparks many new concerns

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Iranian hard-liners are showing no signs of backing down in the trial of 13 Iranian Jews accused of spying for Israel.

However, what remains unclear — in light of a state-televised confession Monday of the alleged leader, Hamid "Dani" Tefileen — is whether Tefileen will take the fall for the entire group, or if his confession will provide ammunition for punishing some or all of the accused. To the despair of family, friends and American Jewish advocates of the Iran 13, no representatives of the media, human rights organizations or Jewish groups were allowed to monitor Monday's first-day proceedings. The reason, said officials of Iran's Revolutionary Court, was fear for "national security."

In this and all Iranian court cases, the judge also acts as investigator, prosecutor and jury, which observers say is clearly a recipe for judicial abuse.

Monday's hearing — which had been postponed from April 13 until after Passover — did little to assuage that concern. In his confession, Tefileen, a devoutly religious man from the southern city of Shiraz, admitted to visiting Israel in 1994.

Iran has denounced Israel as its archenemy. After their arrest more than one year ago, the Iran 13 — including religious and community leaders and one teen-ager — were also accused of spying for the United States. Only Israel was mentioned Monday.

Interviewed by state television after Monday's hearing, Tefileen reportedly also admitted to being trained and paid by the Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency. After the hearing, the authorities assailed him of carrying out this work for "the love of Israel" — and for the money. Israel, for its part, steadfastly denies the link.

"We don't have anything new to say from what we have said in the past," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Aviv Sharon told reporters Monday in Israel.

"We don't have any connection with any of those who stand trial now in Iran."

But it is the Israeli stamp in Tefileen's passport that seems to be, from Iran's perspective, the smoking gun for the entire case, said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"Without him, there's no case," said Hoenlein, who has been closely monitoring developments taking place in Iran. "Getting him to confess was crucial."

Tefileen has not yet been sentenced, though state television said he had asked for clemency.

Hearings for the remaining 12 are likely to continue during the next two weeks. Their fate is virtually impossible to predict, said Hoenlein, as Iranian judiciary officials have not yet produced any evidence. At the same time, they routinely flout Iranian law and demonstrate a blatant disregard for international public opinion, he said.

Iran has been universally condemned for what is widely viewed as a show trial against the 13 Jews. Why, then, did Tefileen confess?

Observers believe that Tefileen, an impoverished trader, may have been facing other trumped-up charges, like drug possession or smuggling.

He may have been offered leniency if he confessed to the spying charge. Or perhaps the freedom of his brother, Omid, was dangled before him.

Omid is one of three accused Jews who was released on bail in February, and is likely to be pardoned.

Either way, said Hoenlein, Tefileen and the rest are innocent.

"If this doesn't give all the appearances of a setup, I don't know what is," said

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Barak seeks Shas backing

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak held late-night talks with the spiritual leader of Shas in a bid to secure the fervently Orthodox party's backing for peace talks with the Palestinians.

The talks raised speculation that Barak had agreed to demands by Shas that he increase funding for its financially troubled religious school system. The secular Meretz Party has threatened to bolt from the government if Barak made such an agreement.

### Settlers evicted from hilltop

The Israeli army forced Jewish settlers from two mobile homes they placed on a hilltop near the West Bank settlement of Elon Moreh, according to the settlers. The dispute came after settler leaders said they had joined with anti-peace groups to combat Prime Minister Ehud Barak's plans to forge peace with the Palestinians.

### Israel marks Yom Hashoah

Observances in Israel of Holocaust Remembrance Day began with a torchlighting ceremony at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. Commemorations will also include a reading of the names of Jews who perished in the Holocaust and the sounding of a siren, when Israelis will stand in silence. Places of entertainment are closed during the 24-hour remembrance period beginning Monday evening.

### Australian leader visits Israel

Australia's prime minister welcomed Israel's offer to pay one-third of the compensation to the families of Australian athletes killed or injured in a bridge collapse at the opening of the 1997 Maccabiah Games. John Howard was told of the offer at the start of his three-day visit to Israel.

Meanwhile, the head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem office called on Australia to help bring Nazi war criminals hiding in Australia to justice.

Hoenlein. "Listen, you sit in jail for a year, in conditions no one knows about. How can we judge someone in that situation?"

Despite the Iranian authorities' apparent self-satisfaction at having their man, Tefileen's court-appointed lawyer, Shirzad Rahmani, told the Associated Press that the confession is not enough to convict.

Under Iranian law, Rahmani noted, the state has to prove its case with evidence.

"There may have been confessions, there may have been an intention to spy, there may have been several trips to Israel, and there may have been payments," he told the A.P. "But if information damaging to Iran and beneficial to Israel was not actually exchanged, there can be no charge of espionage." □

## Prague center to finally undergo metamorphosis into Kafka Square

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — It was a struggle almost as frustrating as that of Joseph K., the victim of faceless bureaucracy in Franz Kafka's most famous novel, "The Trial."

But on April 25, a Czech Jewish professor finally won a 37-year battle to have a Prague city center square named after Kafka, the city's famous son.

Eduard Goldstucker, 87, campaigned tirelessly over the years for authorities to rename the area off the Old Town Square where the German-speaking Jewish writer was born nearly 120 years ago.

"I am so glad that the city is going to do this in my lifetime," Goldstucker said. "I have always wanted this because he was a great writer and is the best-known son Prague has today."

In 1963, Goldstucker — a former ambassador to Israel — organized a conference on Kafka that helped rehabilitate the author in the eyes of hard-line Communist authorities. He succeeded in 1966 in having a plaque erected on the house where Kafka was born, but authorities turned down all appeals for a square to be named after him.

Goldstucker narrowly escaped a death sentence during Czechoslovakia's show trials of the 1950s, when many fellow Communist Party members were executed for anti-state activities. Goldstucker was instead handed a life sentence as a spy and a Zionist. Authorities released Goldstucker after a few years in prison. He fled to Britain after the Prague Spring — a short period of relative freedom in Communist Czechoslovakia — ended with the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in 1968.

Goldstucker then became a professor of comparative literature in England.

In 1992, he returned to Prague and pressed for the Kafka square again. But two successive city mayors rebuffed his requests. The story began its final chapter last year when he won the support of new Mayor Jan Kasl. But there was another obstacle to overcome. Jan Burgermeister, the city official responsible for the center of Prague, opposed the idea of having the square renamed.

He claimed Kafka would have been horrified at the prospect of streets being named after him and cited administrative difficulties in altering numbers on surrounding buildings. But on April 25, Burgermeister was overruled by his superiors on the Prague City Council, including Kasl.

"The objection that Kafka would turn in his grave if something were named after him was absurd," Kasl told JTA. "Prague owes this gesture to Kafka."

According to Goldstucker, the authorities overlooked Kafka for so long because of a conflict between the Czechs and the Germans.

"Prague became a Czech city, and writers like Kafka who wrote only in German were not given street names after them," he said.

The square currently known as U Radnice should change its name to Franz Kafka Square before the end of the year. Kasl said it is possible that a statue of the author may eventually be erected in the square.

Kafka was born in Prague on July 3, 1883, the son of a middle-class Jewish merchant. Although Kafka spoke and wrote fluent Czech, all of his literary work was completed in German. He died in 1924 from tuberculosis. The Nazis later killed his three surviving sisters. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Reparations spotlight shines on prominent U.S. corporations

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — The drive to provide compensation to Holocaust-era victims has reached American shores.

And those being asked to put up the funds are some of America's largest corporations — Coca-Cola, Colgate Palmolive, Eastman Kodak and IBM.

While few U.S. companies have admitted to charges that their overseas subsidiaries profited under the Nazi regime, a barrage of such charges has led to the creation of a U.S. fund for wartime slave and forced laborers.

While it is too early to tell how many American firms will join the fund, there appears ample motivation for them to do so.

U.S. firms who contribute will be "expecting a general closure," said the executive director of the World Jewish Congress, Elan Steinberg, noting that the contributions would mean an end to several threats now looming over the companies — including sanctions, boycotts, lawsuits and image problems.

But at least one lawyer who has filed class-action lawsuits on behalf of Holocaust victims is threatening to proceed with court cases if the companies do not agree to contribute soon. The U.S. initiative to create the fund grew out of negotiations aimed at creating a similar German fund for slave and forced laborers, according to sources familiar with the talks.

During those talks, "there were concerns about U.S. subsidiaries that benefited from such labor," said Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference, which was among the groups negotiating on behalf of the laborers.

The negotiations with Germany resulted in the creation last December of a \$5.2 billion fund, with half the contributions coming from the German government and the other half from German industry.

After the German Parliament approves the fund, a move considered likely, the fund is expected to begin making payments before the end of the year.

Discussions with U.S. firms "moved to front stage" after the conclusion of the negotiations with Germany, said Taylor.

On Monday, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat announced that the U.S. fund would be created under the umbrella of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The fund "will help heal the wounds of the past, avoid confrontation and settle or prevent lawsuits and other potential pressures on American firms," Eizenstat said at the opening of a conference in Washington on corporate responsibility.

A series of lawsuits brought in recent years in U.S. and German courts on behalf of Jewish slave laborers is generally credited with getting Germany to agree to its fund.

For its part, the Chamber of Commerce said it decided to establish the U.S. fund after it was approached by a number of firms that had been threatened with lawsuits over the same issue. Although the details of who would benefit are still sketchy, the U.S.-sponsored fund is expected to augment its German counterpart.

"As large as the German fund is, it may not be able to cover all claims," said Steinberg.

New York lawyer Melvyn Weiss has estimated that as many as 200 U.S. firms with plants in Germany or occupied countries had used slave or forced laborers.

He and other lawyers researched U.S. and German archives to draw up the list of U.S. companies. Several American firms have denied profiting from slave or forced labor, saying their subsidiaries had been taken over by the Nazis. Hours after Eizenstat announced the fund, Weiss called the plan "vague" and said he was willing to wait "a month or so" before proceeding with his previously threatened lawsuits.

"I don't have confidence that they will raise a meaningful amount of money," Weiss said of the U.S. effort. "Unless they have real pressure, from litigation and public pressure, I don't think they're going to do it."

Jewish leaders also felt the plan for the U.S. fund was still vague.

Still, they were optimistic.

"We welcome the commitment of American companies to face up to their responsibilities from this era," said Taylor of the Claims Conference. □

#### Iranian dissidents ruled terrorists

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to overturn the State Department's designation of an Iranian dissident group as a terrorist organization.

The court rejected arguments by the People's Mojahadin Organization of Iran that it has enough ties to the United States to qualify for constitutional protection of its due-process rights.

The Department of Justice says the group, which seeks to overthrow Iran's government, has coordinated attacks on Iranian embassies around the world.

#### U.S., Israel discuss China

U.S. and Israeli officials discussed the Jewish state's proposed sale of military technology to China.

Talks on the sale, which the U.S. opposes, took place Monday in Washington during a broader discussion of strategic relations between the two countries.

#### Haider makes resignation official

Jorg Haider resigned as head of Austria's far-right Freedom Party.

Haider announced in February that he would step down, but it was made official Tuesday during the party's annual congress in the province of Carinthia, where Haider is governor. Despite his resignation, Haider is still expected to make the party's decisions.

#### May Day rallies spark violence

Some 900 neo-Nazis held a May Day rally near Berlin at which speakers called for the expulsion of foreigners.

The rally was one of several held across Germany. Scores of police and anti-fascist protesters were wounded in clashes prompted by the rallies.

#### Rabbis to propose dialogue

A rabbinical delegation is scheduled to formally propose a program to promote interfaith dialogue between North American rabbis and European Catholic bishops. The program to be proposed Tuesday by the North American Boards of Rabbis at the European Bishops Conference in Switzerland stems from a message of reconciliation that Pope John Paul II made in March.

In a related development, representatives of a Jewish group that works to foster interfaith relations convened with Christian leaders they had not met with in five years.

Members of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations held separate dialogues in Geneva with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the Eastern Orthodox Church to re-establish relations and discuss shared concerns, including the current trial of 13 Iranian Jews facing espionage charges.

## Survey: Israel's peace policies more important than pluralism

By J.J. Goldberg

New Jersey Jewish News

WHIPPANY, N.J. (JTA) — American Jews say their personal identity as Jews is more affected by Israel's peace policies toward the Palestinians than by its policies on religious pluralism.

The margin was more than 2-to-1, with 44.6 percent saying Israel's peace policies more strongly affected their Jewish identities, compared to just 19.8 percent who said its policies on pluralism were more decisive. Another 15.5 percent said both issues affected them equally, while 12.9 percent chose "neither."

The response, disclosed in a national telephone survey conducted by Zogby International, appears to contradict the conventional wisdom among Jewish community leaders and activists, who have believed for the last decade that Israel's religious policies touched American Jews more deeply than its peace policies.

The study of American Jews was one of six simultaneous surveys conducted among different ethnic groups. The Jewish sample numbered 589 people, with a 4.1 percent margin of error.

Responses to this particular issue varied strongly with age, political ideology and religious observance. The likelihood of choosing "peace" as the determining issue rose steadily with age, while the likelihood of choosing "pluralism" declined with age.

Among Jews older than 65, for example, nearly 50 percent chose peace as the issue most affecting them; 16.3 percent chose pluralism. Jews between 18 and 29 were more evenly split, with 37 percent choosing peace and 28.5 percent pluralism.

The effect of political views on the responses to the question was more complicated. Concern over Israel's peace policies declined in proportion to a respondent's conservatism, with 48.6 percent of liberals choosing peace compared to 44.9 percent of moderates and 38 percent of conservatives.

Conservatives were more likely to choose "neither" or "not sure." Party identification showed a nearly identical pattern, with Republicans less likely to choose "peace" and more likely to pick "neither" or "not sure."

Most intriguing was the variation by religious observance. People who attend services at least once a week were the least likely to pick peace, at 36 percent. Most likely to choose peace, at 57 percent, were people who go to services once or twice a month.

Ranging in between the extremes were those who attend services "only on special occasions" (46.4 percent named "peace") and "never" (44 percent). Those two groups also had the lowest percentages of respondents choosing pluralism and the highest percentages to pick neither or not sure.

Paradoxically, monthly synagogue-goers were only slightly less likely to choose pluralism, at 22.7 percent, than were daily or weekly worshipers, at 28.7 percent. Instead, daily or weekly attendees were more likely to name "both" (23.7 percent, compared to 5.3 percent for monthly shul-goers).

The responses by religious observance follow a bell-curve pattern first described in the 1980s by sociologist Steven Cohen. He found that political conservatism was highest among the most observant and the least observant Jews, while liberalism was strongest among those Jews actively involved in a liberal stream of Judaism. □

## Notorious terrorist may be amassing nuclear material

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Western intelligence agencies are worried that renegade Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden is attempting to acquire atomic material to create the ultimate terrorist weapon for use against Israeli and Western targets.

Alarms went off three weeks ago, when customs officers in Uzbekistan discovered 10 lead-lined containers at a remote border crossing with another former Soviet republic, Kazakhstan.

According to the London-based Sunday Telegraph, the containers were packed with sufficient radioactive material to make dozens of crude radioactive weapons.

Fitted with conventional explosive devices, each would be capable of contaminating large areas for many years.

The London paper quoted U.S. intelligence sources in the region as saying the shipment contained strontium-90, which is used to manufacture what are described as "radiological weapons."

The consignment was addressed to a company, Ahmadjan Haji Mohammed, in Quetta, Pakistan, but intelligence officials doubt that Pakistan, which has already acquired nuclear capability, was the final destination.

Quetta, they point out, is a little-policed main crossing point from Pakistan to southern Afghanistan and is just a six-hour drive to bin Laden's headquarters in Kandahar.

The Iranian driver of the truck, who insisted the consignment consisted of stainless steel, presented the Uzbek customs officers with a certificate from the Kazakh authorities declaring that the cargo did not contain radioactive materials. The customs officers became suspicious and insisted on inspecting the cargo, however, when their U.S.-supplied radiation sensors "went off wildly."

Kazakhstan, which has denied all prior knowledge of the shipment, is home to many nuclear installations of the former Soviet Union, and atomic materials are known to have been shipped abroad by scientists and criminal organizations in the Central Asian country.

Two years ago, the United States issued portable radiation detectors to several former Soviet republics in an attempt to halt the illicit trade.

Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Central Asia and pledged increased aid for counterterrorism operations and enhanced cross-border controls.

Doug Richardson, editor of the London-based journal *Jane's Missiles*, said a radiation bomb is capable of contaminating the area around an explosion and making a city uninhabitable.

The former head of the Pentagon's Defense Technology Security Administration, Stephen Bryen, was quoted as saying there is a "high possibility" that the radioactive material was destined for bin Laden.

"It's an ideal terror weapon, used in a city and especially places like subways, to cause maximum harm."

Bin Laden is believed to have masterminded the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. At least 263 were killed in the bombings, which left about 5,000 wounded.

He has also been implicated in a number of other terrorist attacks, including the June 1996 bombing of a U.S. Air Force housing complex in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 soldiers and wounded nearly 400. □