



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 21

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. cuts Lebanon force

The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Tuesday to reduce the number of its peacekeepers serving in southern Lebanon. The council also called on the Lebanese government to take control of territory along the border with Israel.

Barak-Arafat meeting sought

Efforts are under way to arrange a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, possibly in Egypt.

Barak this week announced a suspension of political contacts with the Palestinians until after Israel's Feb. 6 election for prime minister, but Israeli media reported that the situation changed after Arafat sounded a conciliatory note during an interview Monday night on Israeli television. "We are looking to achieve real peace between the two peoples," said Arafat, who only a day earlier had launched a blistering attack on Israel at an international economic forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Force again denied that it uses depleted uranium in its weapons against the Palestinians. Tuesday's denial followed Arafat's assertion at Davos that Israel uses such weapons. Arafat repeated the charge in the interview with Israeli television.

Trader said to have helped olim

A former operative with Israel's Mossad intelligence agency said that U.S. commodities trader Marc Rich, who received a controversial pardon from outgoing President Clinton, helped bring Ethiopian and Yemenite Jews to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s.

Avner Azoulai, who now heads the Rich Foundation in Israel, was quoted by Israeli media as saying Rich had made key contacts that helped the immigration efforts.

Palestinians fire mortar in Gaza

Palestinians fired a mortar shell into a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, hitting a house but causing no injuries, according to the Israel Defense Force. The army called Tuesday's incident at the Netzarim settlement "very serious and grave," adding that it was the first time Palestinians have used mortar fire since violence erupted more than four months ago.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Bush's faith-based initiative draws Jewish fans and foes

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A Jewish drug addict needs treatment, but the only program available is one run by Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, so he is forced to accept Allah before he can receive counseling help.

A Jewish homeless family goes to a church-run shelter, but there are no Jewish social workers to talk to, and the family must attend a Christian prayer session in order to receive services.

Could these scenarios happen? Some Jewish activists envision such horror stories as they take stock of President Bush's new initiative to increase the partnership between the federal government and religious institutions in delivering social services.

But while some fear that the Bush administration is setting down a dangerous path that will erode the separation of church and state, others, primarily in the Orthodox community, want faith-based institutions to play a greater role in providing social services, as long as minority religions are protected.

Bush's initiative to help fund social service programming run by faith-based groups marks a potentially dramatic shift in the way federal money will be used to help people in need. The initiative has sparked a national debate about whether religious institutions do charitable work should receive government funding.

In the Jewish community, the debate about church-state separation is accompanied by another significant issue: how such a program will affect the social service landscape that has been a hallmark of Jewish communal work.

Government funding for religious-based organizations to provide charitable services is not new. For decades, local, state and federal moneys have been going to Jewish organizations, most notably the Jewish federation system, to run such programs as nursing homes, drug treatment programs, family counseling and services for the homeless. But, the Jewish federations say, there is a difference between their services and ones that might be run by a synagogue or church.

Federations take great care to follow guidelines that ensure quality control and that safeguards are in place so that there is no blurring of church-state separation, no religious coercion and they have the ability to deliver services in a non-religious fashion. There is concern whether the same safeguards would apply to religious institutions charged with delivering the same services under Bush's plan.

Since the introduction of what is known as charitable choice in 1996, religious institutions have been able to bid for government contracts to provide services to welfare recipients. Over the past several years charitable choice supporters have attempted to expand the approach adopted by welfare programs to other social services through different pieces of legislation.

Now, Bush has begun to make good on his campaign promise to increase the role of faith-based organizations in social service programming. Signing an executive order Monday, Bush established a new federal office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives as well as centers in five federal agencies to address how the government can fund religious institutions.

University of Pennsylvania professor John DiIulio was tapped to head up the new office. Stephen Goldsmith, the Jewish former mayor of Indianapolis, was widely expected to assume that position, but instead he will address the issue of faith and community group involvement in a broader sense.

Goldsmith will serve on the board of the Corporation for National Service, a federal

MIDEAST FOCUS

Arab voters told to block Sharon

A Palestinian minister urged Israeli Arabs to prevent hawkish opposition leader Ariel Sharon from winning Israel's election for prime minister next week. "All Palestinian people, wherever they are, must stand united to stop Sharon," Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said Tuesday.

Jew stopped from run in Yemen

Officials in Yemen rejected the candidacy of a Jewish man who wanted to run in the nation's Feb. 20 municipal elections, according to Agence France-Press.

Yemen's election committee "rejected Ezer Ibrahim's application because he is a Jew, and municipal law stipulates that election candidates should be Muslims," a committee official told the French news agency. Had his candidacy been upheld, he would have been the first Jew to run for political office in Yemen. Some 600 Jews live in Yemen.

Israelis' murder called 'legitimate'

The Palestinian Authority is organizing efforts to defend four Palestinians suspected of abducting and murdering two Israeli restaurateurs in the West Bank town of Tulkarm last week.

The coordinator of the effort was quoted by the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot as saying the actions of the four were a "legitimate" response to Israel's treatment of Palestinians during more than four months of violent conflict.

Histadrut strike nears end

Israel's Histadrut labor federation reached a preliminary agreement with the government to end a strike over wages.

Pending a final agreement, the labor union eased some of its steps, ordering health fund and outpatient clinic workers to return to their jobs. Ben-Gurion Airport also was expected to operate normally.

agency that oversees domestic volunteer programs such as AmeriCorps, and serve in an advisory capacity to the new office.

Before signing the executive order, Bush met with some Jewish, Christian and Muslim representatives.

Jewish community participants included Harvey Blitz, the president of the Orthodox Union; Cheryl Halpern, the national chairwoman of the Republican Jewish Coalition, and Rabbi Abraham Twerski, who directs the Gateway Rehab Center in Pittsburgh.

Bush unveiled an outline of his plan Tuesday and sent the proposal to Congress.

But with details of the plan still sketchy, community leaders are wondering how this action might affect their work. National Jewish organizations focused on church-state separation and local federations already involved in social service delivery share several concerns. Among the assurances they seek:

- Religious discrimination must be prevented in the hiring and firing of people who will deliver the social services;
- The provision of secular alternatives to religiously provided services;
- The establishment of clear "firewalls" between government-funded services and the core religious activities of a religious organization.

These safeguards, say critics, are not just for the sake of legal argument, but are needed to ensure the religious liberties of participants and prevent proselytizing.

Even if these points are addressed, however, it is unclear how they would be enforced. With government money going directly to religious institutions, there is fear that there will be "discrimination with the stamp of approval of the president," said Rabbi David Saperstein, the executive director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism.

Saperstein, who joined with clergy from other religions on Tuesday to voice concerns about the plan, also expressed fears that religious groups would be in the position of competing against each other. Orthodox groups, who support the charitable choice initiative, agree there should be no proselytizing of participants in any program.

They believe, however, that religious institutions should continue to make their own decisions about who to hire to run programs.

Some synagogues might want to apply for the new funding so they will have more flexibility in how they run certain programs, according to Blitz of the Orthodox Union.

For their part, local federations have been wary of the changes that appear destined to affect the social service delivery landscape. There are some federations who are eyeing possible funds and wondering how they might be able to take advantage of the new money. But most are adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

"The big challenge for local communities is to figure out — since it is now a fait accompli that charitable choice is the law — do they stand on principle and not take the money because of what they have long believed, or do they say 'We didn't agree with this but the money is here now and let's move toward getting it,'" said Diana Aviv, vice president of public policy for United Jewish Communities, the umbrella of the federation system that serves as the Jewish community's central fund-raising and social services agency.

UJC opposes charitable choice as a policy, saying it threatens the quality of social services because synagogues and churches will not be required to comply with the same regulations that social services agencies must follow.

If synagogues or churches were not required to hire social workers to provide such services, they could provide the service much more cheaply but there would be a question about the level of quality care, said UJC officials.

It is unclear how many synagogues and churches would try to take advantage of the new funding. Some synagogues and churches will likely be concerned about government intervention. Others will not be able to handle the bureaucratic problems that come with receiving government funding, said Randy Czarlinsky, the director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Houston.

In Houston, the Jewish community center uses government money to help run its Meals on Wheels program, and B'nai B'rith uses federal funding for its housing program. Texas has more charitable choice laws on the books than other states, and according to Czarlinsky, the guidelines have not been misused so far.

Groups that oppose charitable choice should spend their efforts trying to ensure there are regulations in this new federal effort, he said. "Instead of fighting it, make sure it's regulated," Czarlinsky said. "Get a seat at the table." □



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hostein, *Editor*
 Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

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.
 © JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

JEWISH WORLD

Swiss banks to publish accounts

Swiss banks plan to publish on Feb. 5 a list of 21,000 bank accounts that could belong to Holocaust victims, a spokesman for the Swiss Banking Association said Tuesday.

The list is being published under a \$1.25 billion settlement Swiss banks agreed to in 1998 as payment for Holocaust-era claims.

Evangelicals prompt concern

Several Jewish groups joined a coalition of religious organizations concerned about the plans of an evangelical group to hold a conference in West Palm Beach, Fla.

The Chosen People Ministries is holding the Feb. 8-10 conference "with the goal of making Jews' conversion to Christianity a priority," according to the coalition.

The coalition includes the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, as well as the local chapters of the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League.

Pro-Nazi leader to be honored

A statue of the pro-Nazi leader who ruled Romania during World War II will be erected in the eastern Romanian city of Bacau, local officials decided Tuesday.

Marshal Ion Antonescu is blamed for the deaths of more than 250,000 Jews who perished under his regime.

He was executed as a war criminal by Romania's postwar Communist leaders.

Terezin drawings exhibited

An exhibition of 47 drawings by children who were held in the Terezin ghetto during World War II was opened in the Czech Center in Stockholm by Czech Deputy Prime Minister Pavel Rychetsky.

The drawings, collectively titled "I Haven't Seen A Butterfly Here," were completed under the guidance of Vienna painter Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, who was deported to the transit camp at the end of 1942 and died in Auschwitz two years later.

Spielberg gets knighthood

Director Steven Spielberg received an honorary British knighthood in recognition of his "unique and outstanding contribution to international film."

During a ceremony Monday at the British Embassy in Washington, the director of such films as "Schindler's List" and "Saving Private Ryan" said that knighthood is "the stuff that all of our childhood fantasies come from. You know, courtliness, civility and honor."

Bush acknowledges church-state concerns as he outlines his faith-based proposals

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In unveiling a broad outline of his plan to increase partnerships between the federal government and faith-based organizations this week, President Bush acknowledged some of the concerns about blurring the lines between church and state.

"Government, of course, cannot fund and will not fund religious activities," he said Tuesday as he announced his proposals before sending them to Congress. "But when people of faith provide social services we will not discriminate against them."

Bush indicated throughout the presidential campaign that he wants faith-based organizations to take a greater role in social welfare programming.

His proposals came one day after he established a new federal office to coordinate government assistance to faith-based organizations. The proposals outlined publicly Tuesday appeared to be a broad blueprint. The following proposals were announced:

- Open up federal after-school program funding to all groups, including faith-based organizations;
- Provide start-up funds for new social service programs through a "Compassionate Capital Fund";
- Make funding available to faith-based programs on an equal basis with non-religious alternatives; and
- Provide mentoring programs for children of prison inmates.

Bush appeared at a Christian family and social service center alongside Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who had often talked about the role of faith in the public sector during his bid for the vice presidency.

Lieberman was asked by the White House to attend the event, according to an aide.

Lieberman does not endorse the president's specific plan, but he does support its broader principles, said Lieberman's press secretary Dan Gerstein.

Lieberman is concerned about the intermingling of church and state and possible discrimination against certain faiths.

"I am optimistic that we can strike the right balance of inclusion, and harness the best forces of faith in our public life without infringing on the First Amendment and without excluding those of different beliefs," Lieberman said in a statement.

In his brief remarks, Bush said that after visiting synagogues and churches across the country and seeing how effective their social service programs were, he hoped his ideas would "mark a hopeful new direction for our government."

He said that he would work to eliminate barriers to charitable works programs and encourage community and faith-based programs to provide their social services "without changing their mission." Many groups are still waiting to hear more specifics about the plan.

The details of Bush's plan really matter, said Diana Aviv, vice president of public policy for United Jewish Communities, the Jewish community's central fund-raising and social services agency. Aviv said UJC would support more money made available to the community for after-school programs, but not if the money is taken from existing programs. Aviv also said she was encouraged that Bush appeared mindful of some of the church-state separation and religious discrimination concerns.

Most Jewish organizations worry about violations of church-state separation, as well as the possibility that such programs could involve proselytizing and coercion.

But others, primarily Orthodox groups, want to give synagogues and Jewish organizations more of a role in providing services and a chance at more funding. □

Russian region bans neo-Nazi group

MOSCOW (JTA) — The highest court in the republic of Karelia in northwestern Russia banned the activities of the ultra-nationalist and openly anti-Semitic Russian National Unity group, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Karelia is the third of 85 Russian regions to ban the nation's strongest neo-Nazi group. □

Claims Conference begins drive to find Nazis' slave, forced workers

By Michael J. Jordan

NEW YORK (JTA) — Gisella, a Holocaust survivor in her 70s, clutches a manila folder thick with her partially written memoirs and wartime documents. Her eyes are red and puffy from an afternoon of intermittent weeping.

She has just sat through a news conference Tuesday at which Jewish officials launched a global campaign to find and compensate the slave and forced laborers who toiled for the Nazis or their collaborators.

Jewish leaders at the event were careful to describe the compensation — up to \$7,500 per slave laborer — as a “small, symbolic gesture” significant primarily for its “historical recognition” of the atrocities committed against Europe’s Jews.

But that isn’t enough for Gisella. She endured almost three years at Auschwitz-Birkenau, sometimes lugging rocks and sacks of sand, and she lives each day with the knowledge that her mother, father and brother were murdered with impunity.

“You cannot even say this is the minimum; it’s nothing,” says Gisella, a native of Humenne, Czechoslovakia, who today lives in the Orthodox community of Boro Park, New York.

“I should like only that all the goyim kneel down and beg forgiveness of the Jews,” she says, using a Hebrew word for gentiles. “It wouldn’t bring back my parents, but they should know that they let this happen to us. How can they live with this on their conscience? How come the pope didn’t kneel down and say ‘Yes, we can never be forgiven?’ And the Germans! I leave it to HaShem — He should take revenge for us.”

Gisella, who did not want to give her family name, said she will give relatives in Israel any money she receives from Germany.

Yet it’s still unclear when that money will come.

The German government and assorted industries agreed on Feb. 16, 1999, to create an approximately \$5.2 billion fund to compensate slave and forced laborers. The heirs of anyone eligible at that time, who has since died, are eligible to receive the money in his or her stead.

The German authorities lately have been unwilling to release the cash until their lawyers can ensure “legal closure” — that is, a promise that no more lawsuits relating to the Nazi era will be filed.

In the meantime, an estimated 10 percent of Holocaust survivors are believed to die each year.

“For the Germans right now to hold on to this money, while another 10 percent die, is disgraceful,” said Roman Kent, a Holocaust survivor who serves as a vice president of the Claims Conference. The conference was among the groups that negotiated on behalf of the laborers.

“Their deeds contradict their words,” he said. “Half the money should be disseminated without waiting for legal closure.”

In the meantime, the Claims Conference will launch a worldwide publicity blitz this week to track down surviving laborers, both Jews and Gentiles.

There are believed to be some 170,000 surviving Jewish slave and forced laborers. Up to 60,000 Jewish former slave laborers live in the United States, 30,000 or so in the New York area.

Including gentiles, there are an estimated 1 million former slave and forced laborers around the world.

In what Executive Vice President Gideon Taylor called a

“massive logistical endeavor,” the Claims Conference will coordinate efforts with Jewish and non-Jewish groups in some 40 countries, in eight different languages.

In North America, local branches of Jewish family services organizations will spearhead the applications process, together with umbrella groups like the Agudath Israel World Organization, which represents fervently Orthodox Jews.

As part of the publicity campaign, the Claims Conference will take out ads in nearly 160 newspapers. The first ads in the U.S. Jewish media — headlined “Were You Forced to Work for the Nazis?” — should appear this week.

In coming weeks, the campaign will extend to Europe, Israel, South America, South Africa and Australia. Claimants must apply by August 2001. They can obtain application forms at the Claims Conference’s Web site, at www.claimscon.org. Jewish communities across the United States also plan to hold “open houses” at which volunteers will help claimants fill out applications. □

Hungarian Jews are outraged by move to retry war criminal

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Jan. 30 (JTA) — Hungarian Jewish leaders are protesting a call by a far-right party to retry the case of the nation’s executed wartime prime minister.

The leaders said they were “deeply shocked” after the Hungarian Justice and Life Party — which holds 12 seats in the nation’s 386-seat Parliament and is known by its Hungarian acronym MIEP — questioned the sentence imposed on Laszlo Bardossy.

Executed in 1946 for war crimes, Bardossy was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews.

“Bardossy was one of the darkest figures of Hungary’s history in World War II, whose decisions led to the death of hundreds of thousands of our brethren,” the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities said in a statement. The federation also said it is considering filing international protests.

Lorant Hegedus, MIEP’s deputy chairman, accused local Jewish leaders of using the threat of international pressure against Hungary’s chief prosecutor, who has been asked to review the case.

Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office, wrote a letter to the Hungarian government, calling on it to reject the demand for the posthumous rehabilitation of Bardossy.

“We join the Hungarian Jewish community in protesting this step and hope that the government will have the good sense to reject this demand, which not only makes a mockery of the just conviction of a major war criminal, but also deeply insults the memory of his many victims,” Zuroff wrote.

A spokesman for the Hungarian Prosecutor’s Office said it will take several months to review the case.

Bardossy declared war on the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, England and the United States during his 11 months as Hungarian prime minister, from 1941 to 1942.

Under his government, anti-Jewish laws were passed based on the German model. The laws banned mixed marriages and physical intimacy between Jews and non-Jews.

The far right has already tried several times in the last 10 years to rehabilitate Bardossy, but this is the first time the MIEP has taken any official steps. □