



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 79, No. 98

Thursday, May 24, 2001

84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Zuckerman new Conference chair

Media and real estate mogul Mortimer Zuckerman was elected as the next chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, despite opposition from several members.

Zuckerman, who received bipartisan support from former Israeli prime ministers Ehud Barak and Benjamin Netanyahu, triumphed in a 46-6 vote.

The result represented a rare show of dissent in Conference elections, however, with representatives of the Reform movement expressing concern that Zuckerman, who writes a column in the national magazine he owns, *U.S. News & World Report*, might not reflect Conference consensus in his future columns.

Violence shows no sign of letup

One Israeli was killed and another wounded by Palestinian gunfire near the West Bank settlement of Ariel.

The man who was killed was a building contractor, and the second man was a security guard from Ariel. Three Palestinian gunmen reportedly fled from the Ariel area to the Arab village of Salfit, which is under Palestinian control.

In other violence Wednesday, an 86-year-old Israeli man was seriously wounded in the chest when Palestinian gunmen opened fire for a third straight day on Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood.

In the Gaza Strip, 38 Palestinians, including 15 children, were reportedly wounded during a more than three-hour firefight between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen near the border with Egypt.

Bush urges cease-fire

President Bush telephoned the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and urged them to reach a cease-fire and resume negotiations, according to a U.S. official. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat agreed to try to find a framework for peace talks, the official said.

During his call to Sharon, Bush reportedly complimented him on his announcement of a unilateral Israeli cease-fire. Palestinian officials derided Sharon's announcement as a public-relations ploy.

In another development, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, said Washington is drawing up a timetable to implement the Mitchell Commission report.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Liberal Jewish schools update curriculum — by adding Christianity

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — At the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in suburban Washington, Jewish history courses cover the rise of Christianity and church-sanctioned anti-Semitism, and then go on to teach how Jewish-Christian relations have improved in recent years.

Reconstructionist rabbinical students are required to take at least one course in Christianity, and also have the option of taking a course with Lutheran students on Christian-Jewish dialogue. And the Jewish Theological Seminary is considering developing a required course on other religions.

Outside Orthodoxy — where interfaith studies and exchanges remains rare — Jewish learning about Christian tenets and history appears to be on the rise, reflecting a growing climate of trust between Jews and Christians in the United States.

Next week, 50 faculty members and administrators from 21 Christian and Jewish seminaries — including ones representing the Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform wings of Judaism — will gather in Baltimore for two days of discussions on how they teach future clergy about other faiths.

And at a meeting earlier this month, the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, a group of top Catholic and Jewish leaders, issued a recommendation calling on both Catholics and Jews to make learning about the evolution of relations — particularly the church's 1965 repudiation of the concept of Jewish guilt for Jesus' death — a core part of the curriculum for new clergy.

According to the statement, Jewish institutions — due to difficulty overcoming "generational memories of anti-Semitic oppression" — have not made as great an effort as Catholic ones to revamp their teaching about the other in recent years.

Increasingly, however, liberal Jewish institutions are incorporating the history of Christianity into their curricula and are promoting exchanges with clergy of other faiths. Many also participate in exchanges in which rabbinical students study periodically with students in Christian seminaries, or share training in things such as chaplaincy.

While still rare, a growing number of Jewish day schools are integrating Christian history into the curriculum or participating in exchanges with neighboring Christian schools.

In a pilot program jointly sponsored by the Archdiocese of Boston and the local Anti-Defamation League chapter, 13 students at the New Jewish High School of Greater Boston are taking an elective course on the development of Christianity, Catholic holidays and liturgical cycles.

The students met six times this year to study together and do joint social action projects with local Catholic students enrolled in a course on Judaism.

In a similar program, the American Jewish Committee's Catholic-Jewish Educational Enrichment Program, parallel courses are set up between Catholic schools and Jewish day schools. Jewish leaders teach in the Catholic schools and Catholic leaders teach in Jewish schools.

The 10-year-old project, known as C-JEEP, currently is in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles, and will expand to Pittsburgh next year.

Proponents of interfaith learning argue that it actually strengthens Jewish understanding of Judaism and prepares Jews to converse intelligently with Christian neighbors and colleagues.

"From my own involvement with such conversations, I don't feel there's anything

MIDEAST FOCUS

Leaked cable: Arafat called 'lost'

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is "lost" and is intent on evading blame for anything in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Powell's comment came during a March 29 meeting with President Bush and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and was reported in a leaked cable from the German Embassy in Washington, according to *The New York Times*.

Report: weapons network found

Israel's Shin Bet said it uncovered a Gaza network that was manufacturing weapons and was directed and funded by the head of Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip.

In a related development, Israel Radio reported Wednesday that Israeli security officials this week detained an owner of a Palestinian iron factory who admitted to manufacturing dozens of mortar bombs and hand grenades for officials in the Palestinian Authority.

Clinton: Ireland beats Mideast

President Clinton complimented the people of Northern Ireland on their hard-won peace, using the Mideast as an example of what they should avoid.

"Look at what happens when people give up on a peace process," Clinton said Wednesday in Londonderry. There were some protesters in the crowd with placards condemning U.S. arms sales to Israel.

5 Israeli Arabs helped Hezbollah

Five Israeli Arabs were convicted by a Haifa court of having contact with a member of Hezbollah and conveying information to a hostile group with the aim of harming state security.

The five admitted to the charges as part of a plea bargain in which prosecutors agreed to drop charges that they had helped plan attacks with Hezbollah.



Daily News Bulletin

Shoshana S. Cardin, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor (on leave)*

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.

to fear from them," said Rabbi Allan Kensky, dean of the JTS rabbinical school. "My own sense of being anchored in Jewish tradition is enhanced by such conversations. I often gain a deeper understanding of my own tradition by seeing it in light of another."

A familiarity with Christianity also is useful to rabbis when counseling congregants who converted or talking to Jews who are married to Christians.

"Most Jews are unbelievably ignorant about Christianity," said Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, director of religious studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in suburban Philadelphia.

While many argue that Christianity pervades American culture, Fuchs-Kreimer said most of what Jews consider Christian is simply a "paganized" version of the religion, and few Jews know "the actual history of how these religions developed."

Her husband, she said, grew up thinking Christians believed that Jesus had come back to life as the Easter bunny. Nonetheless, Orthodox leaders have generally been reluctant to discuss Christianity, citing concerns that it will undermine Jewish learning or even shatter people's faith in Judaism.

The late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, whose writings remain an authoritative voice for centrist Orthodoxy, responded to the Vatican's 1965 call for more Jewish-Catholic dialogue by permitting joint work on social problems, but not theological exploration.

Yeshiva University's rabbinical school does not offer courses on Christianity, and few Orthodox day schools study other religions or offer exchanges with Christian institutions.

Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, dean of Y.U.'s rabbinical school, could not be reached for comment. Rabbi Joshua Fishman, executive vice president of Torah Umesorah, an umbrella organization for Orthodox day schools, also could not be reached.

Rabbi A. James Rudin, the American Jewish Committee's senior interreligious adviser, said considerably more work needs to be done at seminaries of all faiths, including Judaism.

"When these priests, ministers and rabbis go out into the world, they have a great education in their own religion, but they often don't know firsthand what their neighbors are believing and teaching," Rudin said. "They're going into a very pluralistic America and really need to know firsthand what's the difference between an evangelical Protestant and a Roman Catholic and a Presbyterian."

Rosann Catalano, a Roman Catholic scholar at the Baltimore-based Institute for Christian and Jewish studies, which is sponsoring next week's conference for seminary heads, said, "The challenge is how do you educate seminarians so they're grounded in their own tradition, and at the same time open to and able to provide leadership in a religiously plural world?"

Perhaps more daunting than ideological concerns are time constraints. Most rabbinical schools do not require exchanges or separate courses on other faiths, saying there is a limit to how much can be squeezed into already-crowded schedules.

"You can't add something without removing something else from the program," said Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, dean of the University of Judaism's Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. "Am I in favor of adding more understanding of other religions? Absolutely. But I'm also in favor of more Talmud."

Most Jewish day schools — which already have their hands full teaching both Judaic and secular studies — also find it difficult to squeeze in anything new.

However, Cynthia Peterman, chair of the Jewish history department at Charles E. Smith, said it is "very important for our students to engage in thinking about how they view Christianity today and how Christians view Jews."

"I would hate for our students to come away from their studies of Jewish history thinking that Christians, and Catholics in particular, are all Jew-haters," Peterman said.

But some question whether it's necessary to make a special effort of studying Catholicism or Christianity in general, when they are so much a part of mainstream Western culture.

"Virtually 70 percent of the world history taught in our Jewish high schools is the history of Christianity," said Bruce Powell, head of a new community Jewish high school in Los Angeles and a consultant to day schools.

Powell, who is the former head of the Milken Community High School of the Stephen Wise Temple, also in Los Angeles, said, "Most of history is Christian history. The real question is, do the Jewish schools teach enough Jewish history?" □

JEWISH WORLD

PROFILE

New Russian Jewish leader hopes to make order out of chaos

By Lev Gorodetsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When the Russian Jewish Congress delegates voted for a new president last week, they already knew who would win — the only candidate, oil magnate Leonid Nevzlin.

They also knew what they wanted in the new leader of one of Russian Jewry's top umbrella groups — someone who could lead the RJC out of its struggles with the Kremlin and the chaos that had enveloped it under its controversial former leader, Vladimir Goussinsky.

By all accounts, Nevzlin, who has been serving as interim RJC president since Goussinsky resigned on March 1, fits the bill.

He's successful, mild-mannered and — perhaps, most importantly — less emotional than his predecessor.

Goussinsky is a media tycoon who was chased out of Russia by the Kremlin during an almost yearlong campaign to charge him with fraud and embezzlement regarding his ownership of the NTV television station. His troubles — he is currently living outside of Russia, which has unsuccessfully tried to extradite him — have harmed the RJC, and drawn the organization's resources away from serving the country's roughly 600,000 Jews.

Speaking at the RJC conference in an apparent reference to Goussinsky's problems, Nevzlin said, "The future of the Jewish community depends on its relations with the authorities. We should not give the authorities any pretext to use inter-Jewish discord to reach their own aims, which do not always coincide with ours."

Nevzlin was referring to the RJC's battle with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, which has displaced the RJC as the most vibrant Jewish organization in Russia today.

But he also intends to avoid the outspoken political comments made by Goussinsky, who got into hot water with the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin when he had his network criticized Russia's war against Muslim separatists in Chechnya.

One of Nevzlin's first priorities, he told JTA, is to increase the RJC budget — which, at \$6 million, is smaller this year than last.

In short, he appears to want to become a quiet, but self-confident, manager.

Indeed, one Jewish observer compared Nevzlin to a "Jewish Putin," soft-spoken but forceful, while Goussinsky is seen more in line with Putin's predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, who is considered flamboyant and mercurial.

Being a manager is also what Nevzlin does in his private life.

A resident of Moscow, he graduated with a degree in engineering from the Moscow Institute of Oil and Chemical Engineering in 1982. Along with another Jew, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, he formed one of the first successful private banks in Russia in 1989. The two then went into the oil business together, and now run the YUKOS firm — Khodorkovsky is in charge, and Nevzlin is his deputy.

Nevzlin, 41, is something of a Johnny-come-lately to Jewish life.

He says his current involvement has to do with his two grown daughters from his two marriages.

"For all of my life, I have never felt any substantial anti-Semitism, and was rather indifferent to the Jewish community," he said. "Then something clicked, and I thought, Well, I am over 40, I have made a successful career, I have made a fortune. But what will I tell my children when I am 70?"

Outside of increasing the budget, he offered few specifics on how he plans to revitalize Jewish life in Russia, other than to say he hopes to build Jewish communities, help Jews and combat anti-Semitism.

He did say the RJC would no longer fund religious organizations, in effect seceding that area to the federation.

He said he hopes to mend the rift that has emerged between the RJC and the federation.

Avrohom Berkowitz, the federation's executive director, said he is optimistic that the situation between the two groups would improve under Nevzlin. □

Demjanjuk trial to proceed

A U.S. judge refused to delay the trial of John Demjanjuk, who is fighting allegations that he covered up a past as a guard at Nazi death camps.

Demjanjuk's trial remains scheduled to begin Tuesday.

Demjanjuk could lose his citizenship and be deported if prosecutors prove that he concealed information about his past when entering the United States.

Jewish groups blast Taliban

Jewish groups lashed out at Afghanistan's Taliban leadership for its plan to force members of the Hindu minority to wear identity labels on their clothing.

The order provides a "chilling" reminder of the "Nazi requirement that Jews wear yellow stars," Leonard Cole, chair of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said Tuesday. Taliban leaders defended their decision to require Hindus to wear a yellow piece of cloth on their shirt pockets, saying it will shield them from religious police enforcing Islamic law.

Poland to begin exhumation

Polish officials began preparations to exhume the bodies of up to 1,600 Jewish victims of a World War II massacre by their Polish neighbors. Wednesday's moves came after Poland's Jewish community agreed to the exhumations, as long as they are carried out with the participation of rabbis.

Anti-Semite elected to Duma

A far-right nationalist was elected to Russia's lower house of Parliament, according to the Union of Councils of Soviet Jews. Nikolai Denisov's campaign was tainted by anti-Semitism, with aides calling his opponents "Yids" and "destroyers of Russia."

Denisov himself called on voters to "free the government, the presidential administration and the media from the dominant influence of Jews."

Queen honors Lubavitch rabbi

The leader of the Lubavitch Chasidim in England received an award this week from Queen Elizabeth II.

After Rabbi Nachman Sudak received the Order of the British Empire, which rewards service to the British state, he presented the queen with a mezuzah.

Samaritan leader dies at 82

The High Priest of the tiny Samaritan community located in Mount Gerizim in the West Bank, Levi Ben-Avishai Ben-Pinhas, died Wednesday at the age of 82. The community, which has followers in Israel, immediately named a successor, Yefet Shomroni, 79, who will assume the role following a 30-day mourning period.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES**Water in Israel, always an issue, on verge of becoming 'catastrophe'***By Jessica Steinberg*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Allison Pollack gazes at her green grass with a mixture of pride and remorse: She loves having a velvety lawn, but regrets wasting water to keep it green.

"I feel so guilty letting Asaf run through the sprinkler," Pollack said.

She also lets her 3-year-old son play with the garden hose — but only if it's directed toward the lawn, not the patio.

The next few weeks, however, may bring an end to Asaf's water sports.

Israel is considering imposing a ban on watering lawns and automatic car washes after three consecutive winters of drought-like conditions have devastated the country's water reserves.

Earlier this week, the government's water management committee — which includes experts from national water supplier Mekorot Water Company and the state's hydrological service — urged cutting an additional 250 million cubic meters, or 10 percent, from the existing water supply to avoid what they termed "a catastrophe."

The committee is responsible for safeguarding the nation's water reserves and ensuring supplies of fresh water.

Israel's three main sources of fresh water are the coastal and mountain aquifers and the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Kinneret.

"Israel's water sources are empty," said Shimon Tal, the water commissioner. "The situation is so serious that we are living from hand to mouth. We have lost our ability to regulate flow."

Besides the ban on watering lawns, the committee has proposed prohibiting the establishment of new municipal parks and gardens and introducing water quotas.

This could cut down on Israelis' shower time, as well as on water for washing dishes and laundry.

Tal also is expected to call for at least a 10 percent cut in water supplies to industry.

Some legislators, meanwhile, are calling for compensation to farmers who don't use up their annual water allocations, which already have been cut by an average of 50 percent.

Locally grown tomatoes, cucumbers and avocados have always been staples of the Israeli diet, but the costs of watering these thirsty crops makes them not cost-effective.

Mekorot management has declared that Israel should import produce.

Tal agrees. He has said the main aim of water planning is to reduce water allocations to agriculture — which, together with industry, accounts for half of Israel's annual water consumption.

Crops and car washes aside, the government has to ensure that there is enough water for Israelis to drink this summer.

According to the hydrological service, only 87 million cubic meters of water can be drawn from the Kinneret this year, compared to the usual average of 420 million cubic meters.

Indeed, a glimpse of the Kinneret reveals a wide expanse of dense reed- and seaweed-filled sand, yards away from knee-high water.

The water was visibly deeper just a few years ago.

"This is the first year we are pumping to a degree that risks irreparable damage to basic water supply to consumers," Tal said.

"Our concern is to at least guarantee drinking water next year."

According to water experts, the level of the Kinneret ideally should not be allowed to drop under approximately 214 meters below sea level.

That's just about 1 meter above its present level — and the red line already has been lowered several times.

Mekorot's Sapir pumping station draws water from the Kinneret and pumps it directly into the national water carrier.

If the level were to drop much beyond the committee's recommended cutoff, the station's three pumps would not be able to operate at the same time — and all three pumps have to operate during the summer to ensure a steady flow of water.

The committee report showed that the coastal and mountain aquifers are similarly depleted, with water levels at or below red lines.

Two straight winters of average rainfall and unexpectedly heavy spring showers haven't been enough to alleviate the water crisis.

Moreover, the current solutions have been criticized as stop-gap answers to a mounting crisis.

Successive governments have contemplated potential solutions, from building desalination plants to recycling treated sewage, purifying polluted wells or importing water from Turkey.

One of the problems with desalination plants is deciding who would build them.

Mekorot is the obvious choice, but the monopolistic public utility is embroiled in an endless battle with its 2,100 workers over company attempts to reorganize and improve efficiency.

Workers are worried about lowered salaries and longer hours. But they're also concerned about preserving and protecting Israel's water supply from private companies that may not have Israel's best interests in mind, said Meir El Azra, head of the Mekorot labor union.

Ironically, the most pressing reason for Mekorot's reorganization is the continuing drought.

Yet any investment in pumping, importing or desalinating water will require large amounts of capital, and Mekorot isn't competitive enough to participate in the process.

Last year, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's government approved the Turkish option.

It took another year for the government to begin seeking bids from companies to ship 30 million to 35 million cubic meters of water annually from Turkey.

This week, the government said it is sending a delegation to Turkey to discuss prices and terms.

When negotiations began several years ago, Turkey sought \$0.32 per cubic meter, while Israel offered \$0.08 to \$0.10 per cubic meter.

In the meantime, there has been a sharp increase in shipping prices.

All told, the cost of the water — including getting it into the national pipeline — could bring the total price to \$0.65 per cubic meter. That's not far from the cost of desalinated water, which is estimated at \$0.60 to \$0.70 per cubic meter.

Importing water from Turkey seems to provide a quick and easy solution.

But as local experts have pointed out, importing water has political and security downsides.

"Water isn't like telephone services or cable television," union leader El Azra said. "It's a life necessity. We don't want to further endanger our already precarious water situation." □