



# Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### **Palestinians kills 2 Israelis**

An Israeli woman was killed in a shooting near a settlement outside of Jerusalem. The attack, which wounded another woman, occurred Tuesday at the entrance to Givat Ze'ev.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack, according to Israeli television.

Earlier Tuesday, Palestinian gunmen killed an elderly Israeli-American who drove into the Bethlehem area.

A Reuters cameraman at the scene of the incident said the man's car was riddled with bullets and its interior splattered with blood and body parts. The man's remains were taken to a nearby Palestinian hospital for identification and then brought to Israeli authorities, sources from both sides said.

### **Israeli envoy to step down**

Israel's ambassador to the United States will step down in April.

No successor has yet been named for David Ivry, as Israeli party leaders argue over a suitable candidate to fill the prestigious post.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reportedly favors former U.N. Ambassador Dore Gold, who is seen as someone who can improve Israel's image in the United States, but Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is opposed.

### **Crown Heights ruling challenged**

The brother of a rabbinical student killed a decade ago in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood arrived in New York from Australia.

Norman Rosenbaum said Tuesday he will lobby officials to overturn an appeals court ruling last week that granted a new trial to two men convicted in the slaying of his brother, Yankel.

"I've come here primarily to ensure that we appeal the decision," said Rosenbaum, who is a lawyer. Rosenbaum said he plans to meet with federal prosecutors, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. George Pataki.

Because of the Martin Luther King holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Jan. 21.

## **Changes afoot at AJCongress have both defenders and critics**

*By Rachel Pomerance*

NEW YORK (JTA) — There's an old joke about the three Jewish defense agencies: Upon finding anti-Semitic graffiti, the American Jewish Committee commissions a sociological study, the Anti-Defamation League holds a news conference, and the American Jewish Congress files a lawsuit.

But the distinction of AJCongress as the American Jewish organization most willing to roll up its shirt sleeves and duke it out over civil liberties and the pursuit of peace in the Middle East is long gone, according to many Jewish observers.

As Phil Baum prepares to step down as executive director, the direction of AJCongress, once one of the most liberal of American Jewish organizations, appears to be more fluid than ever.

Baum's departure comes on the heels of a controversy over the firing of the director of AJCongress' New England chapter, Sheila Decter, after more than 20 years of her service to the organization.

Critics say Decter was one of the most beloved and well-respected leaders in Boston and blame her termination on the organization's ideological shift to the right.

But Baum and Jack Rosen, the group's president, say it was a matter of financial accountability.

Apart from the Decter firing and whether it represents a change in direction for AJCongress, one thing is for sure: the organization is in the midst of an extensive restructuring.

The organization has had a hard time finding someone to replace Baum, who indicated his intention to retire a few years ago.

One current contender is Neil Goldstein, a former director of the New York office of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who was recently hired as AJCongress' director of national affairs.

In addition, AJCongress has fired the director of its New York office, closed its San Francisco and Los Angeles offices and hired new directors of its Washington and Philadelphia offices — both of whom hail from politically conservative backgrounds.

AJCongress has since reopened its office in Los Angeles, where its old lay leadership has founded a new organization, the Progressive Jewish Alliance.

A similar group has been started in Philadelphia.

The regional office changes, according to Rosen, are part of a responsible effort to reverse the financial crisis that has long plagued the organization.

As to the question of liberal fires and conservative hires, Rosen said, "Where they come from is irrelevant. They're employed by the organization to carry out its programs."

"I can say, unequivocally, there's been no change on our domestic liberal agenda," Rosen said.

But he acknowledged a policy shift on Israel and the peace process, saying that times have changed.

"In the past, AJCongress supported the policy of land for peace and the Oslo accords," he said. "But as a result of the terrorist attacks by suicide bombers killing innocent civilians, we support the Sharon government in their policy of not negotiating with Arafat until he takes necessary measures to end terrorist activities."

But a former president of AJCongress, who was active with the organization for nearly 50 years, said he believed both fronts have been abandoned.

"I'm very sad, very sad," said Theodore Mann, a Philadelphia attorney and former

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Israel denies U.S. helped nab ship

Israel denied a newspaper report that the CIA helped Israel track down a smuggled arms shipment. "This operation was purely blue and white," said a spokeswoman for the Israeli military, referring to the colors of Israel's flag.

Citing U.S. intelligence officials, The Washington Times newspaper reported Tuesday that Israel asked the CIA to locate the ship carrying the arms.

The report said U.S. officials, using high-tech intelligence-gathering equipment, were able to identify the ship. Quoting U.S. intelligence officials, the newspaper said many of the weapons were identified as coming from Iranian production facilities.

### Shrapnel falls on northern Israel

Shrapnel from missiles fired by Hezbollah gunmen landed in northern Israel.

Residents of the city of Kiryat Shmona took refuge in bomb shelters for half an hour Tuesday after the shrapnel, which came from land-based missiles fired at Israeli aircraft, began to fall.

### U.S. official off to Israel

A senior U.S. State Department official plans to travel to Israel this week.

John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, is expected to meet Israeli officials and discuss Iran as well as Russia's role in helping Iran develop a nuclear capability.

### Amir's brother barred from IDF

Israel's Defense Ministry barred the brother of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin from serving in a special combat unit for fervently Orthodox Jews.

Sagiv Amir, 19, has appealed the decision, saying it punishes him for his brother's crime and effectively bars him from military service because his religion make it impossible for him to enlist in a regular unit.

chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"In a way, it's heartbreaking that it no longer seems to be following either the assertive pursuit of civil rights and civil liberties that it once did or the belief that a peace process was absolutely essential and could not be abandoned."

Mann pointed to the AJCongress' acceptance of some of Bush's recommendations for countering terrorism in the wake of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, such as "rounding up people with questionable due process."

He said, "The American Jewish Congress nationally immediately approved that kind of approach without careful examination and over the objection of surely some of its chapters."

Rosen said AJCongress' stance on the delicate balance between protecting civil liberties and implementing counterterrorism measures is one that has adapted to the times.

"Today we have a world where terrorism places priorities on what programs we're going to pursue," he said.

In light of Sept 11, Rosen said, AJCongress felt "the government needed to have the tools in place to go after terrorists in this country."

Rosen also said the major issues of the 1950s and 1960s, such as civil liberties, "may not be as critical today — although one still needs to defend against" violations.

Current regional leaders also defend the group's positions.

Stewart Weintraub, president of AJCongress' Pennsylvania region, said he has heard accusations that the organization has veered off course, and he doesn't understand them.

"To say the organization's philosophy has changed because of these actions, I don't buy that," said Weintraub.

"Our position is still the same, but the situation has changed," he said, referring to the situation in Israel.

Yasser Arafat was just "caught with his hand in the cookie jar," he said, in reference to the recent shipment of weapons to the Palestinian Authority.

Weintraub also said that on the domestic front, in an area AJCongress has long distinguished itself, the group is "still aggressively advocating the separation of church and state."

Indeed, many of AJCongress' harshest critics say it has continued to preserve the group's heart and soul — its legal work on church and state separation.

And Marc Stern, the group's assistant executive director who spearheads that division, says the "changes and upheavals and disputes" at the organization have not affected his work.

Stern, who also serves as co-director for the legal department and has worked at AJCongress for more than 24 years, is currently at work on a report about military tribunals.

"It's a report which I would have done six years ago and 10 years ago and 20 years ago," he said.

Still, some former staffers say it has changed.

AJCongress had a "uniquely profound voice" from a "secular, humanist perspective," said one former staffer.

Although the Religious Action Center of the Reform movement has assumed much of AJCongress' mission, the former staffer said, it does so from the vantage point of a religious stream.

"If we lose AJCongress from the scene, there will be no representation from their classic perspective," he said. □

## Israel declines to join war crimes court

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel will not join a planned international war crimes court.

Israel made the decision because the treaty establishing the court defines the settlements as a war crime, Justice Minister Meir Sheerit said Monday.

The previous government of Ehud Barak signed the treaty but did not ratify it, and the current government will keep to this decision due to the court's "political" nature, Sheerit said. □



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## JEWISH WORLD

### Ruling on faith-based program not expected to affect Congress

By Sharon Samber

#### U.S. seeks deportation

The U.S. Justice Department is seeking to deport a man living in Illinois for allegedly participating in both the persecution and murder of Jews during World War II.

According to a complaint filed Monday, Peter John Bernes, alias Petras Bernotavicius, was a deputy to Werner Loew, a Nazi-appointed mayor and police commander assigned to Kupiskis, Lithuania.

Bernes helped remove condemned prisoners from jail so they could be taken to nearby killing sites, the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting Office of Special Investigations charged.

During the summer of 1941, more than 1,000 Jewish men, women and children — about one-fourth of Kupiskis' population — allegedly were murdered by men under Loew's command.

#### Clinton urges U.S. resolve

The United States must stay involved in the Middle East peace process, even when it appears to be failing, President Clinton said.

Clinton made his remarks to a sell-out crowd in Los Angeles of more than 6,000 listeners Monday evening at the kickoff of a University of Judaism lecture series.

Even though the United States may risk its prestige in an unsuccessful effort, "We will be judged by what we tried. It is better to try and fail than not to try at all," Clinton said.

#### Australian extremist exits politics

The leader of Australia's far-right One Nation Party quit politics.

Pauline Hanson, who is facing several court actions including electoral fraud, made the announcement in Melbourne this week.

The party's vice president, John Fischer, is now acting president.

One Nation long has been considered a far-right, racist party.

But Hanson's charisma attracted substantial support from the mainstream electorate — some of whom identified with her xenophobic, anti-immigration stance.

#### Ex-forced laborer robbed

An 81-year-old Czech man was assaulted and robbed of his \$1,500 compensation payment for forced labor under the Nazis.

The robbery took place after he collected the money from a post office in the Czech city of Pilsen.

Police said the pensioner was dragged into a building and thrown down a set of stairs before being robbed.

He was not seriously injured.

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A U.S. court ruling striking down government funding for a religion-based social service program is unlikely to influence charitable choice discussions in Congress, observers say.

A federal judge ruled Jan. 8 that "unrestricted, direct funding" of Faith Works, a Christian-based program in Wisconsin that helps fathers with drug and alcohol treatment and job training violates the church-state separation enshrined in the First Amendment.

The decision is the first federal court decision striking down aid to religious groups under the charitable choice provisions included in the 1996 federal welfare reform law.

But it is the political mood on Capitol Hill, not the slow pace of court rulings, that keeps charitable choice a hot topic among lawmakers.

"The drive for charitable choice is overwhelmingly political," said Mark Pelavin, associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

The disconnect between court decisions and public policy is not unique to charitable choice. Still, many activists had cautioned the Bush administration not to push through its plan to funnel aid to religious groups before charitable choice had worked its way through the courts.

The White House suffered a major setback to its faith-based initiative last year when opposition emerged over charitable choice, and it is unclear whether the Bush administration will pursue the hotly contested issue.

In fact, some speculate that the administration will have to suffice with pushing forward legislation on tax credits to spur charitable giving.

Nevertheless, the White House is leaving the door open for reviving its plan, while playing down the effect the recent court case will have on its efforts.

"This case has no impact on the faith-based and community initiative moving through Congress," said Mercy Viana, a White House spokesperson.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed charitable choice in its faith-based legislation last summer, but the Senate has yet to finalize its version of the bill.

Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) have been working on the bill, but it's unclear whether the final draft will be a compromise that leaves out the charitable choice language or a full-blown alternative to the House bill that finesses funding for religious organizations.

Lieberman's press secretary, Dan Gerstein, said he did not think last week's ruling would have much effect on Congress, and noted that Congress has approved charitable choice several times. Experts in the field point out that one lower court decision does not usually have a tremendous impact on public policy.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, which brought the suit against Faith Works, did not argue that this case had implications for the constitutionality of the charitable choice statute, so the court did not address the issue.

A court case that is likely to affect the discussion over charitable choice is one originating in Cleveland dealing with school vouchers, which provide government funds for students to attend parochial or private schools. The U.S. Supreme Court will take up the vouchers case this term, and the decision is expected to be a turning point in the charitable choice debate.

If vouchers are upheld, some experts believe, it will be hard to argue that charitable choice is unconstitutional.

If the high court decides school vouchers are permissible because the money goes from the government to the parent rather than to the school, advocates might argue that a charitable choice voucher would send government money to the social services client, not the religious organization providing the service.

The recent court decision does "make the case you have to very carefully structure legislation" on charitable choice, according to Nathan Diament, director of the Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs. But it's too early for groups who oppose charitable choice to declare victory, he warned.

Diament believes legislation will address concerns raised by the judge and by charitable choice opponents, including safeguards to prevent programs from proselytizing and the need to offer alternative secular programs. □

## Enron scandal poses challenge for Houston Jewish community

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Enron Corporation and Linda Lay, the wife of its chairman and chief executive, have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to Houston's Holocaust museum, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the institution's \$3 million budget.

Now enmeshed in scandal and bankruptcy, Kenneth and Linda Lay were to be among the honorary co-chairs at the museum's annual dinner this March, sharing the title with various dignitaries, including President Bush.

The energy company, which filed for bankruptcy protection last month after acknowledging it had overstated its profits by nearly \$600 million, is at the center of a scandal in which it is accused of lying to investors and abusing its vast political clout.

Enron's collapse and the ensuing scandal are threatening the entire economy of Houston, and its effects are being felt by local Jewish institutions — particularly the Holocaust museum — and some of the city's 45,000 Jews who worked for the company.

Holocaust Museum Houston was one of many local cultural institutions that benefited from Enron and the Lays' largesse and whose future — presumably without their assistance — is uncertain.

Although neither of the Lays are Jewish, Linda Lay — who is on the museum's board — grew up with many Jewish friends and sometimes attended synagogue with them, said Steven Johnson, a spokesman for the museum.

"She really believes in her heart about celebrating diversity, being aware of the dangers of hatred and prejudice," he said.

In 2000, Linda Lay was honored with the museum's "Guardian of the Human Spirit" award, given to an individual "who has reached beyond the ordinary in an effort to better humanity."

The Lays and Enron each regularly purchased \$100,000 tables at the museum's annual dinner, and Enron was the \$100,000 corporate patron of The Human Race, an annual "fun run" the museum sponsors to celebrate diversity, Johnson said.

In addition to the couple's donations, Linda Lay reportedly raised the lion's share of revenue for the museum's annual dinner, raising a significant amount of money, according to one Jewish leader, by making "lots of calls to Enron business associates."

"She was a major source of fund raising for the museum, and now that's dried up," the Jewish leader said. "Now there's no one for her to contact."

While the money from Enron "seems to be through," Johnson said Lay remains on the board and the museum is "hopeful that Linda Lay and her involvement will continue, and that we'll continue to receive some funding from her personally."

Asked whether some might find it unseemly for someone linked to a major scandal to serve in such a prominent role, Johnson said that while "things could change," there has been no discussion of that issue yet.

"Our involvement is predominantly with Mrs. Lay and not Mr. Lay, and she doesn't work for Enron and hasn't had anything to do with what's going on," he said.

"We don't know about Enron's business dealings," Johnson said. "We strictly were a charity they supported."

The Lays also contributed \$2,500 to the Jewish Community

Center of Houston for its scholarship fund, made a one-time contribution of \$50,000 to its capital campaign in 1999 and occasionally contributed to the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston when invited to benefits.

Top professionals with the federation and JCC acknowledge that the Enron scandal is taking a toll on the Jewish community, but say Enron had a relatively minor role as a donor to Jewish causes or an employer of Jews.

So far, local Jewish agencies are not experiencing a surge in demand for services from people who lost their jobs or retirement money as a result of the Enron bankruptcy.

"We've had very few, if any, individuals that have lost their retirement assets approach Jewish institutions for help," said Lee Wunsch, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

However, he said he is personally aware of a few people who are "struggling."

"People in their late 50s that had accumulated retirement assets and saw most of it disappear are having to face the reality that they're going to have to keep working and restart their retirement planning," he said.

Wunsch said the federation has "lost very modest support" as a result of the Enron situation, but did not elaborate.

"Some of our donors were getting matching gifts from Enron. We've lost that," he said.

One Jewish leader who asked not to be identified said he lost more than \$50,000 in Enron investments.

"From what I know, none of the leaders of the Jewish community were involved directly in the Enron debacle, but a lot of Jews were employed there, or were shareholders," the Jewish leader said.

Enron employed a "lot of accountants, lawyers, senior executives, lots of skilled educated people — a lot of Jews were part of that," he said.

Jerry Wische, executive vice president of the JCC, said some of the center's members have lost jobs at Enron, but he did not yet know how many.

"We're encouraging all the Enron employees who are JCC members to come talk to us about financial aid if they need to or if they are considering not continuing their membership" due to Enron-related financial losses, Wische said. □

## Orthodox students to market Israel

NEW YORK (JTA) — A group of American Jewish students is being trained to promote travel to Israel.

In a program called Operation Torah Shield II, 200 students from Yeshiva University in New York are in Israel this week touring the country and participating in training sessions led by the Ministry of Tourism.

Upon their return to the United States, the students will take additional courses sponsored by the ministry. "You are modern-day versions of Calev ben Yefuneh and Joshua Ben Nun," Tourism Minister Binyamin Elon told the group, referring to two of the 12 biblical spies who returned with a good report about the Land of Israel.

"You have seen that the land is good, and you are returning to tell the news to your brothers and sisters."

The trip includes visits to Jerusalem and the Galilee, as well as the Golan Heights and West Bank. □