



# Daily News Bulletin

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## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Lieberman for president?

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) says he'll announce next month whether he'll run for president.

Sunday's announcement by former Vice President Al Gore that he would not run for president in 2004 has opened the door for Lieberman, who had pledged that he would not run against Gore for the Democratic nomination for president.

Gore's running mate in 2000, Lieberman was the first Jew to run for the vice presidency on a major party ticket.

"Obviously, in light of Al's announcement, I will spend time over the coming holidays talking with my family and friends, and announce my decision about a campaign for the presidency in early January," Lieberman said in a statement.

### Blair, Assad break bread

Jews and other pro-Israel campaigners are blasting an official visit to Britain by Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The visit is "quite disgusting," said a spokesman for the Zionist Federation of Britain, one of the main organizers of a protest held in London as Assad had lunch with British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday.

"It has upset many people in the Jewish community in London and beyond." [Page 3]

### Canadian Indian praises Hitler

An Indian leader in Saskatchewan praised Hitler.

In a profanity-laced address at a conference last Friday, David Ahenakew said Hitler carried out his genocidal campaign against the Jews because "the Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war."

Hitler "was going to make damn sure that the Jews didn't take over Germany or Europe," the 69-year-old former leader of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations added.

"That's why he fried 6 million of those guys, you know. Jews would have owned the goddamned world. And look what they're doing. They're killing people in Arab countries."

Federation chief Perry Bellegarde later distanced the organization from Ahenakew's remarks, saying they were "not an official position of anybody except Dave Ahenakew."

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### In second term, Cantor rises rapidly in Republican leadership

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Two years ago, Eric Cantor was one of 435, a freshman lawmaker on Capitol Hill.

Now, with only one term under his belt, Cantor (R-Va.) is a leader, the chief deputy whip of the Republican caucus and the only Jewish Republican in the House.

Cantor, 39, was appointed to the prestigious post of chief deputy whip earlier this month, a position previously held by Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), now the majority whip, and by the current speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), before Blunt.

The position — a seat at a small table of Republican House leaders who set the policy agenda for the chamber — is seen as a significant appointment for a man with only two years of experience in Congress.

In his one term, Cantor has advocated strongly for Israel's security, gaining a reputation as one of the most hawkish members of Congress on the issue.

Cantor proposed legislation in January that would cut off all aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including humanitarian funds currently run by the United States Agency for International Development.

Last year, claiming that Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat was desecrating Judeo-Christian heritage on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, Cantor introduced a bill that would pressure the Palestinians to stop excavation on the mount.

Neither of Cantor's bills have received a hearing or garnered much support on Capitol Hill. The bills also largely have been dismissed by the organized Jewish community.

One Jewish leader said that while Cantor's heart is in the right place, he sometimes acts too quickly.

"He's sometimes knee-jerk, as opposed to thinking it through," said one American Jewish leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Things come out before they're fully formed."

But Cantor has his defenders.

"He is arguably one of the top five best friends of Israel in Congress," said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America. "He is one of the people who early on understood that the Arab-Israeli war is not over borders, but over Israel itself."

Cantor defends his legislation, saying that humanitarian aid to Palestinians frees up funds for their leaders to purchase weapons and promote terrorism.

Cantor told JTA he hopes to advocate a strong U.S.-Israel relationship from his new post at the leadership table, where he will be joined by other pro-Israel legislators such as Blunt and the incoming House majority leader, Tom DeLay (R-Texas). "I have been to Israel many times and I have seen the failure of the Oslo process," Cantor said. "The pressure was placed on an ally and a friend, that being Israel, into making concessions that were not in its interest and not in the interest of the United States."

While he recognizes that both the U.S. and Israeli administrations have come out in favor of the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, Cantor says there is much to be discussed about its implementation, and wants political negotiations to be delayed until Palestinian violence ends. "I don't think there is any hope that you can turn around a thug like Arafat and make him into a partner for peace," he said.

His message will be well received in the Republican caucus. "I think Eric's within

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Lieberman to meet Palestinians

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) will meet with Israeli and Palestinian officials this week in the Middle East. Lieberman is expected to hold separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian legislators.

Lieberman also hopes to meet with other Israeli officials, his spokesman said. Lieberman also plans to travel to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain.

### 3 indicted for planning attacks

Three Palestinians from eastern Jerusalem were charged with planning terrorist attacks in Jerusalem.

The three were said to be involved in a plot to shoot down a helicopter headed for the Knesset landing pad.

The three Islamic Jihad members were arrested Nov. 25, according to details released Sunday.

According to the charge sheet, they also planned to target the prime minister's official residence and set off bombs in several outlying neighborhoods.

### Palestinians petition against Oslo

Some 70 prominent Palestinians signed a petition calling on the Palestinian Authority to abolish the Oslo accords. Signatories include Palestinian Authority officials as well as Palestinian academics in the territories and abroad, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The petition also blasts the United States for preparing to wage war against Iraq.

### Labor to abstain over budget

Israel's Labor Party decided to abstain in this week's final votes on the nation's 2003 budget.

Responding to criticism that Labor pulled out of the unity government over the budget, Labor Party Amram Mitzna said it is important for the budget to pass because of the economic crisis, but that Labor could not support measures that hurt poorer Israelis.

the mainstream of the Republican Party" on Israel, said Matthew Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition. "He doesn't have to do a lot of heavy lifting to convince the Republican party on Israel."

On the domestic front, Cantor has proven himself to be closer to the Republican leadership than to the American Jewish population at large, Jewish leaders say, noting his views against hate crime legislation.

Cantor is more conservative than Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), the retiring Republican House legislator, and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), the only Republican Jew in the Senate. Incoming Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) will also join the Jewish caucus next term.

For example, Cantor co-sponsored a bill, which ultimately failed in the House, that would have allowed churches to participate in political campaigns. That bill was opposed by Jewish groups.

Cantor also garnered an "A" from the National Rifle Association for his work as a state legislator — he served nine years in the Virginia House of Delegates — and was called one of the "most dependable" state legislators by the Christian Coalition.

"You're going to find a solid conservative record, and I think on some issues we're going to disagree with him," one Jewish leader said of Cantor. "But his door is always open to us."

Brooks and other Republican leaders have been hoping to get more Jewish voters to embrace the GOP, and have been using their strong support for Israel as a rallying point.

With the retirement of Rep. J.C. Watts (R-Okl.), an African American, Republicans in Congress had no minorities among their leadership.

That has led some in the Jewish community to speculate that Cantor's selection for the whip position was based on his religion.

"The Republican leadership wants to have some diversity in who their leadership is," one Jewish leader said. "If you're making inroads into the Jewish community, it's a smart move to make."

But Cantor says that is not why he was hired, noting his work in the last Congress and in Virginia.

"I would like to think my selection by Roy Blunt reflects being a work horse, not a show horse or a symbol," Cantor said. □

## Australian Holocaust museum honors Aborigines' protest of Nazis

By Henry Benjamin

SYDNEY, Australia (JTA) — An Australian Holocaust museum is dedicating a plaque to commemorate a protest staged by Aborigines against the mistreatment of Jews in prewar Nazi Germany.

The plaque, which was slated to be dedicated this week at the Melbourne Jewish Holocaust Museum, commemorates a resolution that an aboriginal delegation attempted to present to the German consul general in Melbourne in 1938.

The delegation, headed by William Cooper, brought with them a resolution condemning the persecution of both Jews and Christians in Nazi Germany, but the German consul, D.W. Drechsler, refused them access to the building.

The story of the protest was published in two Melbourne newspapers at the time but slipped into obscurity.

Then, in 1999, Jonathan Morris, executive director of the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Center, learned about the protest from Gary Foley, an aboriginal activist who had studied the Holocaust at Melbourne University.

Once the museum's board learned about the event, it decided to erect the plaque. The plaque will also acknowledge that the museum, founded in 1984, is built on land which is traditionally owned by the Kulin people, an aboriginal group.

It is believed that the protest was one of the first Australian public protests in support of German Jews.

Today, Melbourne's 50,000-member Jewish community includes about 8,000 Holocaust survivors. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Envoy: Some terror justified

The British ambassador to Israel told participants at a conference in Berlin that terrorism in the framework of a national struggle is not necessarily wrong.

"We can all think of times in history when the use of terrorism has been justified," Sherard Cowper-Coles said Monday at the conference on Israeli-European relations, according to the Jerusalem Post. He said Jewish groups, such as the Stern Gang, had carried out acts of terrorism while fighting for the creation of Israel.

### Book's cover prompts ire

The cover of a new book by former U.S. Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstat outraged the Swiss government even before it was published.

"Imperfect Justice: The Unfinished Business of World War II," which deals with Switzerland's wartime financial dealings with the Nazis, has on its cover a swastika appearing within the Swiss flag. "This insults the Swiss people and its symbols," Swiss President Kaspar Villiger told journalists on Sunday. Swiss officials said they may take legal steps to prevent the publisher from using the cover.

### Lubavitch movement gets books

The Russian government transferred 16 holy books to a Lubavitch-run synagogue.

The books, part of the "Schneerson Library," will be housed at the Marina Roscha Synagogue in Moscow, but they cannot be taken out of Russia. The books were confiscated during the Soviet era.

### WWII memorial dedicated

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma helped dedicate a memorial to victims of a World War II massacre. Last Friday's ceremony honored the victims of the Drobitsky Yar massacre.

In December 1941 and January 1942, about 30,000 people, most of them Jews, were killed near Kharkov, Ukraine's second largest city. During the ensuing Nazi occupation, many Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians and Gypsies were also killed at the site. The local Jewish community welcomed the new memorial, particularly because it emphasizes that Jews were the main victims of the massacre, a fact downplayed during the Soviet era.

### Statue honors wartime hero

A statue was unveiled honoring a late Japanese diplomat serving in wartime Lithuania who saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust.

The statue of Chiune Sugihara was dedicated last Friday in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district. Jewish, Japanese and Lithuanian officials were among those attending the ceremony.

## Officials rolled out the red carpet for Assad visit, British Jews charge

By Richard Allen Greene

LONDON (JTA) — British Jews have responded angrily to an official visit here by Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The visit is "quite disgusting," said a spokesman for the Zionist Federation of Britain, one of the main organizers of a protest held in London as Assad had lunch with British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday.

"It has upset many people in the Jewish community in London and beyond," spokesman Simon Barrett added.

As Blair and Assad met Monday, hundreds of pro- and anti-Syria demonstrators chanted and banged pots and pans outside the gates of Downing Street.

Assad's visit — the first official visit to Britain by a Syrian head of state — is being seen partly as a reward for Syria's recent support of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, which threatened Baghdad with "serious consequences" if it did not allow U.N. weapons inspectors to return to Iraq.

Syria, the Security Council's only Arab member, was not expected to back the resolution when it came up for a vote in late November. But it cast its supporting vote at the last minute, allowing unanimous passage of the resolution.

In addition, observers say, Assad was invited to London because Britain is eager to keep Syria behind the U.S.-led coalition in the event of an attack on Iraq.

But British Jews say such strategic goals do not justify the red-carpet treatment Assad is receiving.

In addition to a lunch with Blair, Assad is also meeting Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles, and is being hosted by the Lord Mayor of London during his Dec. 15-18 visit.

Lord Janner, a veteran Labor Party politician and a vice president of the World Jewish Congress, said it is "perfectly reasonable and proper" that, as leader of a country on the Security Council, Assad be received by the prime minister.

"But it is not reasonable that he meet the queen or Prince Charles," Janner said.

Many British Jews went further, especially in light of Assad's support for suicide bombers in an interview last week with the Times of London newspaper and a report in Britain's Daily Telegraph that Syria is continuing to smuggle arms to Iraq.

Moreover, critics point out, terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine all maintain offices in Damascus.

"It is one thing having dialogue and another having a red-carpet treatment," said Stuart Polak, director of the lobbying group Conservative Friends of Israel.

"Syria is still on the American list of states that sponsor terrorism," said Polak, who participated in Monday's demonstration.

The British government "has totally stepped overboard" by making Assad's trip "almost a state visit," the highest level of diplomatic visit, he said.

The Zionist Federation of Britain said London's position appeared inconsistent.

"How can we be fighting a war on terrorism" if Assad is "on an official visit and meeting the queen?" Barrett asked. "There is a completely contradictory message going out to the British public."

He added: "There are issues that have to be highlighted, like his support for Hezbollah and Al-Qaida in the refugee camps of southern Lebanon, and Syria's illegal occupation of Lebanon."

Meanwhile, the son of a kidnapped Israeli businessman is visiting London at the same time as Assad to highlight Syria's links to terrorism.

Ori Tannenbaum's father, Elhanan, was kidnapped by Hezbollah operatives while on a business trip in Europe in October 2000.

His fate remains unknown.

"There is clear evidence that Hezbollah's criminal activities are being carried out with the full knowledge and sponsorship of Syria," which provides "significant operational, financial and political aid," a spokeswoman at the Israeli Embassy in London said.

Blair said before meeting Assad on Monday that London and Damascus do not see eye to eye on terrorism. □

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Likud sees lead wilt as inquiry mounts into alleged vote buying***By Leslie Susser*

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Until now, the Israeli election campaign has seemed like a formality: The only question seemed to be how large a majority Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon would win when the ballots were counted.

Not any more.

Pundits say a police investigation into allegations of corruption in the selection of its Knesset candidates could cost Likud enough seats to lose the election.

While the Labor Party is facing its own investigation, analysts say the scope of the Likud scandal could be enough to swing the Jan. 28 election to Labor.

According to the Likud's own internal polls, the scandal — which broke last week with allegations that aspiring Knesset members had been asked to pay for political support — already has cost Likud two or three seats.

Party insiders say the trend seems to be continuing.

Before the scandal, polls showed the Likud's right-religious bloc leading Labor's left-center bloc by about 65 seats to 55, with parties likely to join their coalitions included.

That means that a swing of just five or six seats from right to left could make Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna prime minister, not Sharon.

As Mitzna himself says, his dream is no longer "pie in the sky."

The trouble for the Likud started when several defeated candidates went public with stories of approaches from "vote contractors" offering to deliver votes in return for cash. There also were tales that members of the Central Committee, the 2,940-member body that chose the candidates, were wined and dined by would-be legislators.

Some of the money for this heavy-duty canvassing was believed to come from underworld figures, some of whom recently joined Likud.

Enigmatic reports surfaced in the press about "criminal families" having funded campaigns of Cabinet ministers and Knesset members, and of "current or past criminals" who had hosted senior ministers at their homes for lunch or dinner.

If the reports are true, would some of the Likud's representatives in the Knesset or in the Cabinet be beholden to their benefactors, political observers here asked.

Media reports in the wake of the scandal were uniformly scathing. Chemi Shalev, an analyst for the Ma'ariv daily, wrote that "there always was and always will be corruption in politics, but in a place where representatives of the underworld are elected directly to the legislature, it's only a matter of time before the pagan idol takes over the temple from within."

What made the alleged extortion and funding attempts possible was the Likud's decision to switch from nationwide primaries back to a system in which the Central Committee chooses the party's Knesset list.

Nationwide primaries would have put the decision in the hands of the Likud's 300,000-strong membership, making it virtually impossible to buy votes and difficult to put together decisive voting blocs.

In contrast, it's relatively easy to reach the much smaller pool of Central Committee members to make deals and deliver votes.

Indeed, one of ways the Likud has tried to deflect criticism has been to blame the system.

Sharon, in fact, lost no time in asking Justice Minister Meir Sheetrit to suggest an alternative system.

Likud spin doctors dutifully emphasized Sharon's courage in taking on the Central Committee and moving to divest it of its most important power.

Labor, which did hold nationwide primaries for its Knesset list and stood to gain most from the Likud's embarrassment, has not emerged entirely unscathed.

Following a complaint from the Association for Good Government, Israel's attorney general ordered a police investigation into allegations of irregularities in two Druse precincts in Labor's primary.

Labor members argue, however, that alleged voting irregularities in just two of more than 600 precincts nationwide isn't akin to the large-scale buying and selling of votes by criminals.

The fact that both Likud and Labor are under investigation could help smaller parties in the Labor's left-center bloc, such as Shinui and Meretz, which have made cleaner politics part of their campaign platforms.

Both Shinui and Meretz have been trying to pull voters from the two larger parties, and are getting set to play political hardball. They will be helped by the fact that Likud and Labor will fight viciously against each other.

The Likud had not planned on a negative campaign against Labor or its leader.

Campaign strategists argued that to attack Mitzna, who is not so well known, would give him free exposure. Now they have changed their minds.

Likud will attack Labor over the associations that helped finance Ehud Barak's victorious prime ministerial campaign in 1999, and which were subsequently the subject of a wide-ranging police investigation.

It also will attack Mitzna for an American bank account set up in his father's name — apparently quite legally — to collect donations, and anything else they can dig up.

The Likud is seriously considering hiring American spin doctor Arthur Finkelstein, the master of the negative campaign, who ran Benjamin Netanyahu's 1996 and 1999 prime ministerial bids.

Labor is sure to keep the Likud bribery and corruption allegations on the public agenda for as long as possible.

The campaign still will focus primarily on Israel's security and economic problems, but it will be accompanied by a degree of mudslinging no one anticipated this year.

This is not what Sharon or some Labor Party leaders, like former Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and his camp, wanted.

They had hoped for a relatively quiet campaign, with the two major parties getting more than 60 seats in the 120-member Knesset and being in a position to form a unity government impervious to pressure from smaller, single-issue parties.

The Likud scandal puts that two-party majority at risk. More importantly, it gives Labor a chance of leading the next government. □

*(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent for the Jerusalem Report.)*