



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 81, No. 11

Thursday, January 16, 2003

86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Lieberman speaks to conference

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) told American Jewish leaders Wednesday that he sees the Palestinians making only about a 10 percent effort to halt violence against Israel.

Just two days after announcing that he will run in the Democratic presidential primaries in 2004, Lieberman addressed the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. He called on the Bush administration to be more involved in trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He also defended his support for Saudi involvement in peace negotiations, noting that while the terms of a Saudi peace initiative last year were "unacceptable," Saudi Arabia's entry into the negotiating process was significant. [Page 3]

Respondents cite split loyalties

Nearly one-third of Americans are concerned that a Jewish president may have split loyalties, according to a new poll. The survey, conducted by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, found that 32 percent of Americans are concerned that a Jewish president might not act in America's best interests if they conflict with Israel's.

The survey also found that Americans under the age of 35 hold more anti-Semitic beliefs than the previous generation.

Israeli envoy presents credentials

Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations presented his credentials Wednesday to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Prior to his new posting in New York, Dan Gillerman served for more than 15 years as chairman of Israel's Chamber of Commerce.

Terrorists' homes destroyed

Israeli police and soldiers on Wednesday destroyed the homes of an eastern Jerusalem-based terrorist cell responsible for killing 35 Israelis. The attacks attributed to the so-called Silwan cell include last July's bombing at the Hebrew University and suicide attacks at a Jerusalem café and a pool hall in Rishon le-Zion.

In another development, the army on Tuesday closed two Islamic colleges in Hebron. The action was part of Israel's response to the Jan. 5 double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in which 23 people were killed.

After Meretz vote, groups calling for reform of Presidents Conference

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — Several disgruntled members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations are discussing ways to reform the 52-member umbrella group.

The impetus for a Jan. 3 conference call, coordinated by Mark Rosenblum, founder and policy director of Americans for Peace Now, was a vote last month rejecting membership applications from Meretz USA and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

The Presidents Conference is the representative body of American Jewry. It advocates on domestic and foreign policy issues with U.S. and foreign governments.

For several years, critics have alleged that conference leaders make decisions for the group without reaching a consensus, and that membership requirements are ambiguous.

The recent membership vote has sparked a new discussion of membership requirements, accountability and voting procedure.

Meretz USA first applied for membership four years ago and appealed last month, despite two informal indications from the membership committee that the group was unlikely to win entry. At last month's meeting, Meretz USA got just 15 votes and the RRA 31 from the Presidents Conference, both short of the 34 needed to join.

Joel Meyers, co-chair of the conference's Process and Procedures Committee, reviewed and confirmed the vote on Meretz USA and the RRA. Critics alleged right-wing political bullying and claimed that a quorum had not been present.

But for Rosenblum, the vote "raised the issue of inclusiveness at a time of hurt and confusion and anxiety in the Jewish community."

Now is "a good time to make sure the tent is large, and we know that there needs to be rules for membership in the conference. But we want those rules to be transparent and public," he said.

The talk of reform is unnerving some Presidents Conference leaders.

At a meeting on Tuesday called to discuss the group's position on a possible U.S.-led war against Iraq, the conference leadership expressed dismay that discussion of procedural issues was taking place outside of the conference, and finding its way to the media.

Mortimer Zuckerman, chairman of the conference, said the organization is not resistant to change — through the proper channels.

"We've had a lot of meetings and there is a process and procedures committee," Zuckerman said. "We are open to suggestions and, in fact, we reiterated that just yesterday at a meeting of about 10 to 15 people."

The unhappy contingency — representatives of eight to 10 groups that primarily are left wing, such as Americans for Peace Now, the Jewish Labor Committee and the Labor Zionist Alliance — are so sore about the rejection of Meretz USA that they are considering revisiting the issue.

Suggestions offered during the Jan. 3 call included filing a lawsuit against the conference, drafting an open letter expressing the groups' criticism or simply dropping the issue.

The group seemed to favor dropping the Meretz issue to focus on broader changes in conference structure, according to one participant on the call.

Such ideas include forming an executive committee, an idea that has been backed

MIDEAST FOCUS

3 Palestinians killed

Three Palestinians were killed during clashes with Israeli soldiers that took place in the West Bank on Wednesday.

In Tulkarm, Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian youth who threw firebombs at them. Palestinians said another youth was killed during clashes there.

Near Jenin, a 45-year-old Palestinian was killed during an Israeli army operation to arrest two Tanzim militia members armed with rifles, grenades and ammunition.

Israel: Help us with water crisis

The Israeli government appealed to the Jewish National Fund to continue building and developing water projects in Israel.

The request came after the Israel Meteorological Service forecast lower than average rainfall this winter and began preparing for an extended drought.

"Since the water shortage has long exceeded the critical point," Water Commissioner Shimon Tal wrote to JNF World Chairman Yehiel Leket, "we need your support again on behalf of our government."

Israel wants the JNF to develop dams, water reservoirs and water recycling reservoirs, Tal wrote. "In addition, we are interested in developing special educational programs for the Israeli public on water conservation."

N.Y. politicians visit Israel

Eighteen New York state legislators are visiting Israel for a weeklong solidarity mission.

The mission, sponsored by the UJA-Federation of New York and the Jewish Community Relations Council, is headed by the speaker of the State Assembly, Sheldon Silver, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Delegates include both Jewish and non-Jewish legislators.



Daily News Bulletin

Norman H. Lipoff, *President*

Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*

Lisa Hostein, *Editor*

Michael S. Arnold, *Managing Editor*

Lenore A. Silverstein, *Finance and Administration Director*

Paula Simmonds, *Marketing and Development Director*

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.

by Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform movement's congregational group.

"I favor the participation in the Presidents Conference of all legitimate national groups, however small. But larger organizations should be given a role commensurate with their size, so that the conference genuinely reflects the true balance of opinion in the Jewish community," Yoffie wrote in August in the Forward.

"A representative executive committee would provide the administrative oversight that is now sorely lacking in Presidents Conference operations," he wrote. "The conference is the only major organization in American Jewish life that operates without an executive body to oversee its day-to-day functioning."

The reformers also suggested more drastic measures, such as creating an alternative organization to the conference, one source said.

That idea already was tried during the 1990s when a group of liberal members of the Presidents Conference, calling themselves "Jewish leadership in support of the peace process," convened regularly by conference call and email.

Rosenblum was a coordinator of that group — which was made up of 32 organizations, including some that weren't Presidents Conference members.

The group became a serious presence, meeting with President Clinton and other national figures and drawing as many as 150 Jewish leaders to its meetings, Rosenblum said.

But the group "crashed and burned with the failure of negotiations," he said.

Asked if he would consider another such effort, Rosenblum said, "We're always looking for ways for people to be visible to support a peace process" while "defending Israel and also finding a way forward."

In the meantime, officials of Meretz USA said they hope the conference will reconsider the group's application.

"I think the conference is destroying its credibility by excluding people that disagree with AIPAC" and conference leaders on Israeli policy, said the president of Meretz USA, Jeremiah Gutman.

But others insist the vote wasn't partisan. According to Stephen Wolnek, chair of the conference's membership committee, the committee did not consider Meretz USA a "major organization" in terms of membership, budget or number of employees.

Meretz USA "is so tiny, with only a couple of employees, that it would really make a mockery of the claim that this is a conference of major organizations," agreed Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Gutman also said he suspects the Presidents Conference lied about the number of members present at the meeting after questions were raised about a quorum.

Some conference members who know of the reform discussion question it.

While the issues of membership procedure and requirements have "never been resolved satisfactorily," said Jerry Goodman, executive director of the National Committee for Labor Israel, "we should let the dust settle" from the Meretz USA vote "and then begin to look at the issues."

While he supports Meretz USA's membership application, Goodman said, he believes the issue is "being overblown by some groups."

Despite the objections, Rosenblum told JTA the conference calls will continue.

"It wasn't a one-shot discussion," he said. "We are having another conference call to talk about this, and it's ongoing."

One source said the next call is scheduled for Thursday. □

Sharon seeks congressman's help

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reportedly asked a U.S. congressman of Lebanese descent to assist in negotiations on a possible prisoner swap between Israel and Hezbollah.

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) briefed Lebanese and Syrian authorities about the Israeli request and his plan to comply with it, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported, citing the Arab-language Al-Hayyat newspaper.

In recent months, Issa has met with relatives of captured and missing Israelis in Lebanon, the report said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Germany bans Islamic group

Germany's interior minister outlawed an Islamic organization that he accused of spreading anti-Semitic propaganda.

The group, Hizb ut-Tahrir, "is distinguished by the fact that it is active in universities with anti-Semitic slogans," Otto Schily told a Germany TV station Wednesday.

He added that the group had long been under observation by German authorities. The Interior Ministry said the group advocates the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews.

Campaign for Portuguese Dreyfus

A Jewish group reportedly launched a campaign to clear the name of a man known as the "Portuguese Dreyfus."

The Jerusalem-based Amishav organization is trying to persuade the government of Portugal to posthumously clear the name of Arthur Barros Basto, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Basto was a Jewish army captain driven out of the Portuguese military on trumped-up charges in the 1940s.

"This year marks the 60th anniversary of Capt. Barros Basto's discharge from the military," said Amishav's director, Michael Freund. "He was a Jewish hero and role model, and his only transgression was that he sought to inspire people to return to Judaism at a time when that was not popular with either the Portuguese government or the Church authorities."

Protests spur Hitler show revision

Under fire by Jewish groups, CBS executives will rework an upcoming TV miniseries about the young Hitler.

CBS President Leslie Moonves said the upcoming "Hitler: Origins of Evil" will include new material in addition to the biography upon which it's based, due to concerns by some Jewish scholars and organizations that the series would humanize Hitler, the New York Daily News reported. "I don't think anybody is going to walk out of this miniseries saying, 'Gee, you made Hitler into Tony Soprano,'" Moonves said.

Hebron riots survivor dies

One of the four remaining survivors of the 1929 Hebron massacre died Wednesday. Rabbi Yeshayahu Goldschmidt was 86 years old. He served for 30 years as head of the Tel Aviv rabbinical court, Israel Radio reported.

In 1929, when Jews were killed during an Arab riot in Hebron, the remainder of the Jewish community fled the city. A Jewish group, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, returned to Hebron following the 1967 Six-Day War.

A JEWISH PRESIDENT?

Lieberman faces tough questions from across the Jewish spectrum

By Matthew E. Berger

NEW YORK (JTA) — Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) is already facing tough questions from the organized American Jewish community on both the domestic and foreign policy fronts.

In his first appearance before a Jewish audience after announcing his candidacy for the U.S. presidency, Lieberman addressed a large gathering of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Wednesday.

Lieberman said he was there not as a candidate but as a lawmaker to report on his recent trip to the Middle East. His aspirations for the White House, however, certainly appeared to factor into his comments.

Sources say Lieberman called the meeting with Jewish leaders specifically to address concern within the Orthodox and more hawkish segments of the community about comments he made while in the Middle East last month.

At the time, he said he supported a Saudi Arabian peace initiative that called for Israel to revert to its 1967 borders in exchange for recognition from the Arab world.

He also said he had heard positive signs from some Palestinian leaders about the prospects for reform — and the need to end the intifada.

As his campaign kicks off, he is also being questioned by more liberal Jewish leaders, who oppose his support for school vouchers and faith-based initiatives and his view that faith should play a stronger role in government programs and policies.

Speaking to what many believe to be his base of support — the Jewish community — Lieberman straddled the line between clarifying his views to assuage Jewish critics and sticking by his statements.

Lieberman said he agreed with President Bush's June 24 speech at the White House, in which he called for new Palestinian leadership and a conditional Palestinian state.

"I said in both Israel and to the Palestinians that there remains support in the United States for a two-state solution, but it will not happen until there is 100 percent effort to stop terrorism by the Palestinians," Lieberman said.

But he said that now the Palestinians were only showing about 10 percent effort.

Lieberman also criticized the Bush administration for not being active enough to make progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On Tuesday, he called on the Bush administration to appoint an emissary for the conflict.

"The administration made a good statement and then left the field," he told the group. "The fact is nothing good is going to happen there unless America is on the ground and pushing the parties."

Lieberman said he did not meet with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat because he agrees with the administration that Arafat "hasn't earned the kind of interaction" that the Palestinian leader once enjoyed.

Lieberman faces obstacles among both the liberal and conservative segments of the Jewish constituency for different reasons.

Liberal Jewish leaders say Lieberman's support for school vouchers is a real problem and could be a litmus test for some Jews.

On Monday, in his announcement to go for the Democratic nomination, Lieberman laid out certain conditions for vouchers, saying they should only be used for low-income students and funds should not be taken from public school budgets.

"Opposition to vouchers is a major position of our movement," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the umbrella group for Reform congregations. "His support for vouchers in the past is certain to be a source of concern."

And despite Lieberman's attempt at damage control Wednesday, some hawkish Jewish leaders remain skeptical of his views on the Middle East on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "I felt he did not appreciate the concern and the inappropriateness of the statements he made concerning Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians Arabs" when he was in the region, said Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America. □

OBITUARY

Rabbi Steven Dworken dead at 58; heart attack fells Orthodox leader

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Rabbi Herschel Billet was home with the flu Monday and couldn't answer when he received a call from Rabbi Steven Dworken, his longtime friend and colleague.

But Billet, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, wasn't surprised when he played the message.

Dworken "just said, 'It's nothing much, just calling to see how you're doing, Harry,'" Billet recalled.

Several hours later, Dworken, 58, executive vice president of the Orthodox rabbinical group, was on the phone with his sister-in-law when he suffered a fatal heart attack.

His many friends and colleagues were deeply shaken by Dworken's death, but not surprised that it happened while he was reaching out to others.

"He knew how to use the phone. He was always on the telephone, always in touch with people," said Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, the congregational arm of modern Orthodoxy. "He was a man who touched everybody in the Jewish world."

Some 1,000 mourners attended Tuesday's memorial service for Dworken at Yeshiva University in New York City.

Hundreds of rabbis from all denominations and from all over the country arrived for the service. The chief rabbis of Israel and the United Kingdom sent personal messages.

Like many in the modern Orthodox organizational world, Dworken was a product of Yeshiva University, and many at his memorial service said he remained deeply loyal to the school and its outgoing president, Rabbi Norman Lamm. One characteristic defined Dworken, according to those who knew him.

"He was a rabbi's rabbi," Weinreb said. "Hundreds of rabbis looked to him for advice. He believed in the American rabbi, and his cause was helping rabbis do their jobs."

For many who knew Dworken, that might have been the most important fact about his professional life. A veteran pulpit rabbi in Stamford, Conn.; Portland, Maine; and Linden, N.J., Dworken was known to reach out to rabbis in the field, including those outside the major metropolitan areas.

Whether it was discussing a sermon, mediating contractual issues between rabbis and synagogues or guiding a rabbi through a matter with a congregant, Dworken was always there, friends said.

"He may have been in touch with people regularly on the phone, but it was a matter of him going out to be with people, visiting with them, not really caring about organizational or procedural matters," said Rabbi Moshe Krupka, the O.U.'s director of community and synagogue services.

Dworken was more than a decade older than Krupka, but that didn't prevent the senior rabbi from treating the younger man with respect and friendship.

"Not every time we spoke did we agree; in fact, sometimes we disagreed," Krupka said. "But whether it was procedural, or about outlook, ultimately we were colleagues and friends and were going to do the best that we could. I always knew he was a man of integrity, whose heart and soul were given over to the Jewish people."

Dworken was praised as a mensch, a straightforward, soft-

spoken man less concerned with political activism or political maneuvering than with counseling rabbis.

"He would give advice all the time to rabbis, and he would make sure he was in the background, that the people he was advising would get the credit," O.U. President Harvey Blitz said.

Dworken joined the RCA shortly after its revered leader, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, stepped down following almost four decades at its helm. It was a time when RCA members were "trying to find ourselves again," Billet said.

"Obviously Rabbi Soloveitchik was irreplaceable, but Steve Dworken gave the RCA focus," Billet said.

Dworken reached out to the rank and file, while cementing new ties with modern Orthodox rabbis in Israel and the United Kingdom. The RCA saw its conference attendance grow and its membership rise to 1,200.

"What he was able to do was retain the older generation while empowering the younger generation, through the force of his character, his concern for others and his burning desire that American Orthodoxy would flourish and be led by true leaders of Torah," Krupka said.

He retained especially close ties with those like Krupka and Weinreb, and forged closer ties with the Orthodox Union, associates said. "The RCA has flourished under his tutelage," Krupka added. "It's a strong, vibrant, diverse, creative and relevant organization that has lifted the mantle of Torah high for all to admire and emulate."

Dworken did not avoid taking positions on tough issues, such as hammering out a new code for agunot — women whose husbands refuse to grant them divorces — helping steer the Orthodox establishment through the sexual abuse scandal of Rabbi Baruch Lanner, or defending the inclusion of material about gay victims of Nazism in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Yet "he was a guy who didn't have an agenda," Billet added. "He wasn't a back-stabber and he didn't play both sides of the fence. What you saw is what you got."

Friends described Dworken as deceptively warm and funny, but his modesty "hid his wisdom and common sense," said Weinreb, who joined the RCA when he was a rabbi in Baltimore, at Dworken's urging.

Dworken was able to accomplish a lot at the RCA with a relatively small budget and just a handful of professionals on his administrative staff, added Blitz.

"In many ways, it was a one-man shop," Blitz said.

Blitz was just one of many people to talk with Dworken on Monday, when they discussed raising money for Jewish schools in economically ravaged Argentina. "He sounded absolutely normal," Blitz recalled. "This just came out of the blue."

But Dworken had a history of heart trouble: He suffered a heart attack when he was in his 30s. A brother died of a heart attack in his 20s.

Because of that history, Dworken exercised frequently and ate carefully. "I never expected to participate in his funeral," Weinreb said. "He was young, vibrant. It just wasn't on my agenda."

Some wanted to remember him that way. It was mostly Dworken's phone messages that Billet needed to erase each day, but "I won't be deleting that one" from Monday, he said.

A Boston native who lived in Teaneck, N.J., Dworken is survived by his wife, Susan, two daughters, a son and several grandchildren. He was buried Tuesday in Beth El Cemetery in Paramus, N.J. □