



# Daily News Bulletin

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86th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### New tape criticizes Iraq war

A new audiotape believed to be from Osama bin Laden calls on Iraq to use suicide bombers against the United States to block Israel's alleged plans for expansion.

According to CNN's translation of the tape, which was released by Al-Jazeera television, the speaker says he is monitoring U.S.-led plans to defeat Iraq and "install a regime that has Tel Aviv and Washington at its head," ostensibly in preparation for "a greater Israel."

The speaker recommends fighting back with suicide bombers, who he says "have scared Americans and Israelis like never before."

### Ramon buried in private service

A private funeral service was held Tuesday for Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon. At the family's request, police kept uninvited guests, including members of the media, away from the service at a hilltop cemetery in Nahalal, a moshav in northern Israel.

### Oscar nods play Jewish tune

The Pianist," a film about a musician who survives the Holocaust, was nominated for seven Oscars, including best picture. Based on a memoir by Polish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman, the film also received nominations for best director (Roman Polanski) and best actor (Adrien Brody).

A German entry, "Nowhere in Africa," was nominated for best foreign language film. It describes the struggles of a German Jewish refugee family in the 1930s to adapt to life in Kenya. Nominated in the documentary feature category was "Prisoner of Paradise," about a popular Jewish entertainer in pre-Hitler Berlin who was killed in Auschwitz.

### P.A. memo cites Hamas ambitions

Hamas wants to replace Fatah as the dominant party among the Palestinians, according to a memo prepared by the Palestinian Authority's security services.

Because of the Presidents Day holiday in the U.S., the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Feb. 17.

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Federations join debate over Holocaust restitution

By Joe Berkofsky

NEW YORK (JTA) — Miriam survived the Warsaw Ghetto, her husband's death and a stroke. Now the North Miami Beach resident subsists on about \$1,000 a month in Social Security payments and Holocaust reparations, which help buy medication for high blood pressure and depression.

"The medicine is so expensive, my God," says Miriam, 89. "Right now I have a very good doctor, he gives me samples."

Miriam, who asked that her real name not be used, is one of perhaps 145,000 Holocaust survivors nationwide, some 40 percent of whom lack adequate health insurance and rely on Medicare, Social Security and reparations to cover the rising health care costs associated with aging.

Many of these needy survivors are reaching their late 70s, and their situation is exposing a battle between the main organization handling Holocaust reparations and some survivors and Jewish organizations.

At issue are the central questions of who should benefit from unclaimed Holocaust reparations and who should be responsible for helping survivors.

The debate has engulfed not only survivors but a growing chorus of Jewish organizations and federation leaders. They are criticizing the Claims Conference for its policy of spending 20 percent of the proceeds from the sale of unclaimed German-Jewish property on Holocaust documentation, education and research, rather than on the care of needy survivors in North America.

Leaders of the Claims Conference respond that 80 percent of the \$430 million from the sale of unclaimed East German Jewish property since 1995 has funded social welfare programs for needy victims of Nazi persecution in North America and 30 other countries — including the former Soviet Union, where many survivors are destitute.

Julius Berman, chairman of the Claims Conference, says the mandate of the East German property settlement includes the mission to "memorialize the people and the way they lived."

The Nazis would be "more than elated" if the Jews did not remember Nazi crimes, Berman added. "It seems to me we're spitting in their faces, which we should be doing."

In part, the struggle reflects an ongoing debate over who should receive the bulk of the \$11 billion from the various restitution fronts, including looted Swiss bank accounts, reparations for forced German laborers and slaves, Holocaust-era insurance claims and unclaimed German property.

The controversy flared anew in June 2002 when Israel Singer, president of the Claims Conference, suggested in an essay in the Jewish literary magazine Sh'ma that a new organization be created to spend some future Holocaust restitution "to rebuild the Jewish soul and spirit" through education and other activities.

The survivors "are the first beneficiaries, but not the only heirs" of Jewish property, said Singer, who was instrumental in negotiating restitution agreements. "The Jewish way is to take care of those in need, but also to educate our children."

While the Claims Conference has not yet moved to broaden its official scope, Singer's essay sparked a firestorm of criticism. Among the major critics is the Florida-based Holocaust Survivors Foundation, which represents some 50 grass-roots survivor groups with more than 20,000 members nationally.

Last September, the group submitted a proposal made by the Association of Jewish

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Soldiers kill 2 Palestinians

Israeli troops killed an armed Palestinian in the Gaza Strip late Monday. The Palestinian was carrying a Kalashnikov rifle and wearing a bulletproof vest when he was spotted by soldiers near a crossing into Israel. His body was found at daylight Tuesday, the army said.

In another incident, Israeli troops carrying out arrests in Nablus shot dead a Palestinian militia member trying to avoid capture.

### UNRWA appeals for funds

A U.N. relief agency warned that it may run out of funds to help feed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The U.N. Relief and Works Agency is making an international appeal to replenish a \$94 million fund it uses to feed about 1.1 million Palestinians.

Before the intifada began in September 2000, UNRWA helped feed about 115,000 Palestinians, according to The New York Times. Relations have been tense between Israel and UNRWA, which administers Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel accuses the agency of doing nothing to prevent Palestinian terrorists from using the camps as bases to attack Israeli targets.

### Israel ratifies anti-terror treaties

Israel ratified two U.N. anti-terror treaties. Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu notified U.N. officials that Israel had signed on to the 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

"As a nation at the forefront of the struggle against vicious terror organizations, we believe that the international community as a whole must come together to combat terrorism," Arye Mekel, Israel's deputy ambassador to the U.N., said in a statement.



## Daily News Bulletin

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Family and Children's Agencies to New York District Court Judge Edward Korman, who is overseeing the Swiss banks case. The proposal said it would cost \$30 million annually to boost survivor health care, and suggested that the Swiss banks money be used to fill the gap.

The plight of needy survivors crossed the radar screen of many communal leaders in November at the annual General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities. The Holocaust Survivors Foundation handed out flyers blasting the Claims Conference policy of funding Holocaust education as "intolerable."

Leo Rechter, 75, of New York, secretary of the survivors group, called the fliers a "desperate measure," but said they helped focus attention on the crisis.

Some say the argument over the 80-20 split between survivor needs and education misses the point. Eli Zborowski, 77, of New York, a Claims Conference board member, says proceeds from the East German properties belong solely to the heirs of German Jews, not to all survivors, he said.

Zborowski also believes the Claims Conference should not bear the sole burden for the health care crisis, arguing that Jewish organizations and federations should also pay.

Many federation leaders say they already aid survivors on the local level. John Fishel, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, said his federation spends about \$250,000 a year on needy survivors via local Jewish Family and Children's Service agencies, but the money falls short.

One mega-philanthropist and federation donor who believes federations should be doing more to help survivors is Michael Steinhardt. A new member of the Claims Conference investment committee who has spearheaded groups to boost Jewish education, Steinhardt described the dilemma as "Solomonic."

"There's no question that some survivors' needs are unmet — but at the same time, how do you measure how these funds belong only to the survivors?" he asked. "They belong in some real sense to the dead — and in that sense, should be a function of the total needs of the Jewish people and the Jewish future in general."

The allocations debate already has come to a head in Boston, where representatives of an estimated 400 local survivors clashed with Claims Conference officials at a meeting in January. In addition, a handful of federation executives nationwide met in December with Claims Conference officials to air their concerns about the 80-20 split.

Gideon Taylor, the executive vice president of the Claims Conference, points to the fact that 75 percent of the group's allocations from all the claims settlements — \$750 million in 2001 and 2002 alone — goes directly to survivors.

Claims Conference officials say while 20 percent of East German property sales pay for Holocaust documentation, education and research, that spending amounts to less than 1 percent of all the conference's allocations.

During the past eight years, the Claims Conference has spent \$85.7 million on Holocaust education, officials say. Funding has gone to such efforts as a research database at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial; the training of Catholic high school educators about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism by the Anti-Defamation League; and trips to sites of Nazi atrocities.

"There is no future if one doesn't examine the past, particularly when it comes to Holocaust education," Singer said.

But for the first time, Taylor has signaled the possibility that the Claims Conference would devote extra money to health care for survivors when its board meets in July to hammer out its coming fiscal year budget.

Meanwhile, pressure over the 80-20 formula continues to build on the Claims Conference.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston last month unanimously backed a resolution that it will bring to the annual Plenum of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs in March, asking the Claims Conference to "revisit" its education spending.

"You cannot justify Holocaust money being used for anything other than basic needs," said Nancy Kaufman, the executive director of Boston JCRC. "It is unconscionable that" the conference "is sitting on the money."

UJC also has named Lorraine Blass, a senior planner at the federation umbrella group who was project director of the National Jewish Population Survey, as its lead official on a task force to study the issue. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Most Jews see Iraq-terror link

Three-quarters of U.S. Jews support the Bush administration's contention that Iraq supports Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, according to a new poll.

The poll by the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish & Community Research found that 76 percent say Iraq has links to terrorist groups, and 62 percent have a similar view of Iran. In addition, 60 percent say Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority supports terrorism, and 53 percent say the same about Saudi Arabia.

### Conference allocates \$76 million

The Claims Conference said it allocated nearly \$76 million last year to help needy Holocaust victims. The funds, distributed in more than 30 countries, were used for assistance including hunger relief, medical care, rent subsidies and day care centers and nursing homes.

Funds totaling \$8.6 million were allocated last year to organizations and institutions engaging in Holocaust research, education and documentation, the group said.

### Catholics learn about Judaism

A group of Catholic scholars from France is visiting New York to learn about the American Jewish community. The group, which was invited by the World Jewish Congress, will spend a week in New York visiting Jewish communities and seminaries, and talking with sociologists and philosophers of Judaism.

"We men of faith have an obligation to make" religion "into a source of understanding and of brotherhood," Israel Singer, the president of the World Jewish Congress, said Monday night at a dinner in the Catholic group's honor.

### Ex-Yahoo chief acquitted

A French court acquitted the former president of Internet giant Yahoo of charges of condoning Nazi war crimes. The court ruled Tuesday that Timothy Koogle and Yahoo did not condone or praise Nazism even though the Internet portal auctions Nazi memorabilia.

Koogle, who left his post at Yahoo in 2001, faced up to five years in jail and a fine of nearly \$50,000 in a trial prompted by a complaint filed in October 2001 by French Jewish and anti-racism groups.

### Father of Cape Town Jewry dead

Leon Wilder, known to many as the father of the Cape Town Jewish community, died suddenly Feb. 3 at 76. A prominent businessman, Wilder held leadership positions across the entire spectrum of Jewish life in South Africa. On the international front, he was, for eight years until 1995, a member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

## Draft version of E.U. Constitution omits any mention of God, religion

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — God. Dieu. Dio. Gott.

Whatever the Supreme Being is called in the more than a dozen languages spoken in Europe, there is no mention of the deity in a draft of the new European Union Constitution made public this month.

Nor is there any mention of religion in the draft of the first 16 articles of what is to become an American-style written Constitution for the European Union presented Feb. 6 at a news conference in Brussels.

"The union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, values which are common to the member states," read the draft of Article 2, the section that deals with European values. "Its aim is a society at peace, through the practice of tolerance, justice and solidarity."

The draft was presented by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who is the president of a European Constitutional Convention that includes 105 delegates from the 15 current E.U. member states and the 10 countries slated to join next year.

The secular wording was hailed as a victory by European leaders and others who backed a clear separation of religious and political identities.

"I am very satisfied," Amos Luzzatto, the president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, told JTA.

During some of the debate on the issue, he said, "It had looked as if there might have been wording adopted that would have excluded not only a good part of the Europeans, but a good part of European history. The wording adopted appears to be the best solution, and I hope it can be productive for the future."

But the Vatican declared the wording "completely unsatisfactory," and some conservative Christian politicians vowed to press for a mention of religion in the constitution's preamble or other parts of the document.

Whether to include a mention in Article 2 of the deity or other specific reference to Europe's spiritual or religious heritage had been a contentious issue. It had polarized delegates and underscored differing visions of identity in a Europe that is home to several Christian denominations and at least 10 million Muslims and other religious minorities, including more than 1 million Jews.

It had also contributed to debate over what constituted "Europe," given the European Union's eastward enlargement. In December, attendees at an E.U. summit agreed to admit Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia next year. In addition, predominantly Muslim Turkey wants to join.

The decision to omit any religious reference was taken by the 13-member presidium, or coordinating body, of the convention, which had to sift through and debate a wide range of proposals from the delegates as well as write-in suggestions from the European public and lobby groups.

The Vatican had pushed strongly for inclusion of a reference to the contribution that religion — and Christianity in particular — has made to European heritage.

Pope John Paul II told Giscard last fall during an audience at the Vatican that believers want their "identity and specific contributions to the life of European societies" respected by the new constitution.

"The contribution of Christianity and man's Christian vision in the history and culture of different countries is part of a common treasure, and it appears logical that this should be inscribed in the project of the convention," he said.

Some delegates, including politicians from Germany, Italy, Poland and Slovakia, had pressed for Article 2 to include a phrase adapted from the Polish Constitution and which would state: "The union's values include the values of those who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty as well as those who do not share such a belief, but respect these universal values arising from other sources."

Other delegates and lobbying groups had pushed for a reference to Europe's "Judeo-Christian" heritage. □

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

**With party down, Natan Sharansky lands on his feet on Sharon team***By Matthew Gutman*

TEL AVIV (JTA) — On a brisk February night in 1986, a short, pale and balding man who gained acclaim as the leader of the refusenik movement in the Soviet Union stepped off a plane at Ben-Gurion Airport and into Israeli legend.

Ten years later, when he decided to leverage his reputation for courage and integrity as a political candidate, Natan Sharansky shocked Israel's political establishment when his new immigrant-rights party, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah, won seven seats in its first election.

Since then the party's fortunes have steadily declined, and on Jan. 28 the myth of Sharansky seemed shattered: Yisrael Ba'Aliyah won just two seats in Israel's latest elections, and Sharansky resigned from the Knesset.

Israeli politicians never die, however, they just reincarnate.

Following a short post-election vacation — and 17 years to the day after he stepped onto the Ben-Gurion Airport tarmac — Sharansky struck a deal with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to merge Yisrael Ba'Aliyah into the Likud, the Knesset's largest party.

A cartoon Sunday in the mass circulation daily Yediot Achronot showed a gnome-like Sharansky scurrying up a ladder leaning against a giant Sharon. Playing on the name of Yisrael Ba'Aliyah — which can mean "Israel on the rise" — the cartoon said that Sharansky really was the one rising.

Under the terms of his agreement with Sharon, Sharansky will become a minister without portfolio, responsible for Jerusalem and Diaspora affairs. He also is expected to have a seat in the small inner Cabinet that authorizes Israeli military operations.

In exchange, the addition of Yisrael Ba'Aliyah's two seats increases the Likud's representation to 40 in the 120-seat Knesset.

Aides and pundits called Sharansky's decision to resign his Knesset seat a magnanimous decision. And joining Sharon, at a time when Yisrael Ba'Aliyah has the support of only about 2 percent of the Israeli electorate, was a wise one, the pundits said.

Despite what may seem a demotion from his post in the last government, when he oversaw an annual budget of hundreds of millions of shekels in the Housing and Construction Ministry, many say Sharansky is perfect for the Diaspora affairs post.

Bobby Brown, an adviser to the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel and a senior adviser on Diaspora affairs to former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, praised the move.

"Most Knesset members now serving were born and raised in Israel. They don't have the experience of living abroad and making aliyah, and so can't really understand what that entails," Brown said. Sharansky is sensitive to the plight of immigrants, but not only those hailing from the former Soviet Union, Brown said.

For example, Sharansky managed to push through amendments to new laws that would have taxed immigrants' pensions and other overseas funds. Many warned that the new taxes would discourage immigration to Israel from prosperous western countries.

Furthermore, Sharansky appears to be a good successor to Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israel's first minister for Diaspora affairs, whose party was affiliated with Labor.

"Melchior made it a real ministry, and I see Sharansky taking it a step further to give Jewish communities abroad a voice in Israel, and vice versa," Brown said.

Sharansky says his party's apparent failure in the last elections actually is a sign of success.

"I've been saying ever since the birth of the party that it is a tool for reaching a specific social aim: integration," Sharansky said.

"Already in 1996 I said that our aim is to get into the process of integration to empower" immigrants "to open doors, so they can enter the rooms where the decisions are made," he told JTA in a telephone interview. "It was a unique experiment."

Sharansky says his party helped propel local politicians to the deputy mayor positions in 20 municipalities. That has created a base for Russian representation in the crucial lower rungs of Israeli politics, he said.

Almost 800,000 recent immigrants form the former Soviet Union were registered for the Jan. 28 elections. That only 8 percent of them voted for a party that aims to represent their interests shows how quick their integration into Israeli society has been, Sharansky said.

Indeed, almost 15 years after the massive wave of immigration began as the Soviet Union crumbled, Russians rank among Israel's top businessmen, scientists, and even young army officers.

Inertia prevented Yisrael Ba'Aliyah from changing to reflect that reality, so the party essentially disintegrated, Sharansky said.

Public opinion experts faulted Yisrael Ba'Aliyah's campaign managers, arguing that the party had focused on the concerns of elderly immigrants, while hardly reaching out to Russian youth.

Even the four pillars of Sharansky's political philosophy — the need for Israel's neighbors to practice democracy before peace becomes possible; the need for compromise to bridge the religious-secular divide; the need for electoral reform; and the need for a smaller, decentralized government — failed to move young voters.

"Young Russian Israelis consider themselves young Israelis and are not looking for an immigrant party, but an Israeli party that might also cater to their interests," public opinion analyst Dahlia Scheindlin said.

Sharansky says most of the party's voters moved to Likud, Yisrael Ba'Aliyah's ally for the past several years. Likud officials say the Likud gained about nine Knesset seats from immigrant votes.

While he doesn't have the charisma of some politicians in the television age, Sharansky continues to exude the determination that kept him sane for nine years as a Prisoner of Zion in solitary confinement.

Both Sharon and Netanyahu have changed positions over the years on the idea of a Palestinian state. Yet Sharansky rarely has wavered in his belief that only a democratic Palestinian state is a viable peace partner for Israel — and can serve its citizens well.

Likewise, he consistently has called for electoral reform in Israel and for smaller, more decentralized government.

As for his political future, Sharansky is not pessimistic. He has a strong ally in Sharon, who was among those Sharansky embraced at Ben-Gurion upon his arrival in 1986 and was the first person to call him after he announced his resignation.

Sharansky is content to play a smaller role, relinquishing the symbolic title of deputy prime minister and getting down to work with "the things I know, understand and can do without having the backing of members in Knesset: the Diaspora and Jerusalem portfolios."

"I no longer have the power to defend heavy budgets from cuts, so we'll have to start again with the little things," he admits, contentedly. □