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86th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Swiss banks assailed

Many Holocaust survivors and their heirs may never receive compensation from the Swiss bank fund, the lawyer supervising the process said.

The banks, which agreed in 1998 to \$1.25 billion in payouts to people who suffered because of the banks' cooperation with Nazis, restricted access to documents and therefore "interfered with the claims process," supervisor Judah Gribetz said in a report.

So far, \$485 million has been paid out from the settlement, Gribetz said, according to *The New York Times*. The banks did not comment directly on Gribetz's comments, but other lawyers involved in the case said the banks were surprised by the harshness of the report, the *Times* said.

Religious reform launched

Israel's Religious Affairs Ministry is slated to be dismantled by the end of the year.

Two members of the National Religious Party walked out of Wednesday's Cabinet session before the vote, saying they may quit the government if the vote for dismantlement passed. But officials of the Likud Party were quick to insist that religious services in Israel would not be harmed and that the decision is being taken only as a cost-saving measure.

House panel backs Syria bill

A U.S. House of Representatives committee OK'd legislation that would punish Syria for supporting terrorism. On Wednesday, the International Relations Committee moved the Syria Accountability Act to the House, where it is expected to be voted on next week.

The bill bans the sale of items that can be used for both nuclear and non-nuclear purposes to Syria and requires the president to institute his choice of other sanctions, including freezing Syrian assets and banning exports to Damascus. Congressional staffers say they expect Congress to pass the legislation and President Bush to sign the bill by November.

Arafat had heart attack?

Yasser Arafat suffered a mild heart attack last week that was kept under wraps, a British newspaper reported. According to Wednesday's report in the *Guardian*, Palestinian officials called the Palestinian Authority president's condition the flu for fear of causing panic in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

California's Jews try to sort out new political realities after election

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — What's a Jew to do when the Republican son of a Nazi Party member defeats the Democratic incumbent to become governor of the nation's most populous state?

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em, say jubilant Republicans, hoping that California Jews will flock to support the state's new governor-elect, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"It used to be in California that we were afraid to speak out in a roomful of Jews, but now we're standing up and speaking up," the ecstatic chairman of the Southern California chapter of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Bruce Bialosky, said at Schwarzenegger's victory party Tuesday night. "Why, even the rabbis are changing their sermons!"

Bialosky's enthusiasm was shared by Jewish Republicans across the state Tuesday night, minutes after Gov. Gray Davis, a Democrat, conceded his loss in the recall election, and the Republican action-movie star was chosen as his successor.

"This is akin to the Reagan revolution," proclaimed attorney Sheldon Sloan, one of Schwarzenegger's earliest Jewish backers. "We're going to make big inroads into the Democratic hold on Jewish voters."

That analysis was not shared by most Democrats or political analysts, however, who predicted that there would not be any fundamental changes in the state's political culture — or in the Jewish tendency to vote Democratic.

Davis assiduously cultivated California's one-million strong Jewish community during his five years as governor.

In a quick, informal election-night survey, experts and party activists weighed in on whether Jewish influence in Sacramento would wane under the new governor.

"I doubt it," Republican pollster Arnold Steinberg said. "There are so many Jews in the entertainment industry and on the west side" of Los Angeles "who know Arnold, and he will be reaching out to the Jewish community fairly quickly."

Bialosky and Sloan said they were certain that there were enough high-level Jewish Republicans in Los Angeles and other parts of the state that Jewish concerns would be heeded in the new administration.

Urban analyst Joel Kotkin disagreed, saying he foresaw a "pretty heavy gentile administration" with a concomitant loss of Jewish clout.

Experts said they doubted Schwarzenegger's victory would do much to strengthen Republicans nationally.

But "it's a big morale booster for the beleaguered White House," said political scientist Raphael Sonenshein, of California State University in Fullerton.

The Republican victory could end up energizing Democrats, Sonenshein said, because the Davis recall has "enraged thousands of Jewish and other Democrats, who will redouble their efforts to beat Bush at the next election."

Sonenshein predicted that the 2004 national election "will be the closest to a civil war we've had since the Civil War."

The president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, John Fishel, said a Schwarzenegger administration's real impact on California Jewish communities might be in economic terms, especially if deep budget cuts lower state support for Jewish and other social welfare agencies.

Jewish voters apparently were little influenced by charges that the Austrian-born Schwarzenegger, whose estranged father joined the Nazi Party during World War II,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Syrian rattles sabers

Syria will retaliate militarily for any additional Israeli strikes on its soil, a Syrian diplomat said.

"If Israel attacks Syria one, two and three times, of course the people of Syria and the army will react to defend ourselves," Mohsen Bilal, Syria's ambassador to Spain, told Reuters on Wednesday.

But Syrian officials later backtracked from Bilal's remarks, saying they represented his personal opinion.

Israeli soldiers wounded

Three Israeli soldiers were wounded in the West Bank. The incident came as Palestinian gunmen opened fire on an Israeli army ambulance near Nablus. Meanwhile, Palestinians approaching an Israeli checkpoint in Tulkarm told troops about a suspicious bag nearby.

The bag contained a bomb and detonator, according to Israel Radio.

Rebellious pilot fired

The Israeli air force fired the highest-ranking pilot who signed a letter refusing to carry out missions in populated Palestinian areas.

Reserve Brig. Gen. Yiftah Spector was fired from his job as an instructor at the air force's training academy. Last Friday, two other of the 27 pilots who signed the letter were dismissed after they refused to recant their positions.

Report: Israeli MIAs dead

Three Israeli soldiers missing since 1982 will soon be declared killed in action, according to Israeli television reports.

The three MIAs have been missing since a tank battle during Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Israeli officials would not comment on Wednesday's report. But the father of Zachary Baumel, one of the missing soldiers, said he has indications his son is still alive.



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admired Hitler when he was younger. Schwarzenegger was largely estranged from his father before he died, and the actor repeatedly has disavowed any support for his father's political views.

Over the weekend, Schwarzenegger's campaign released a transcript of an interview 25 years ago in which the bodybuilder-cum-actor said, "In many ways I admired people — it depends for what. I admired Hitler, for instance, because he came from being a little man with almost no formal education, up to power. And I admire him for being such a good public speaker and for his way of getting to the people and so on. But I didn't admire him for what he did with it."

The actor also has long supported the Simon Wiesenthal Center and its Museum of Tolerance, both as a donor and as a speaker on behalf of tolerance.

"Arnold has been our No. 1 supporter in the entertainment industry, and he is certainly an anti-Nazi," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the center's associate dean.

On election night, Cooper agreed to join the transition team managing the changeover from Davis to Schwarzenegger.

Kotkin, who said Jewish influence in Sacramento would wane as a result of the Schwarzenegger victory, put most of the blame for the change of fortune on Jewish leaders — who, he said, "had ignored their own tradition by making comfortable deals with Davis, an amoral politician who debased the political culture of California."

Kotkin said that if the Democratic establishment had not pressured top-ranking Democrats to stay out of the recall race to keep support for Davis strong, stronger candidates like Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who is Jewish, "would have creamed Schwarzenegger."

No demographic exit polls were available in the hours after polls closed, but Kotkin estimated that 30 percent of Jewish voters cast their ballots for Schwarzenegger, an unusually high figure for a Republican in California.

As euphoria spread among California Republicans after Tuesday's election, Jewish Democrats sought whatever silver lining they could find in the news about the new governor.

Howard Welinsky, chairman of Democrats for Israel, said that while Schwarzenegger's agenda was unknown, the Jewish community had had excellent relations with the state's previous Republican governor, Pete Wilson, who served as Schwarzenegger's chief advisor.

Daniel Sokatch, executive director of the Progressive Jewish Alliance, said he hoped the election results would fire up liberals.

He also noted that other elected state offices, the legislature, and the House and Senate delegations still have Democratic majorities.

Jews also could find some modest consolation in the overwhelming defeat of Proposition 54, which was opposed by almost all Jewish organizations.

The measure would have stopped the state from collecting and using most racial and ethnic data.

Opponents feared that passage of the proposition would have hampered efforts to stop racial profiling and encourage affirmative action.

But, as John Pitney, professor of government at Claremont McKenna College, observed, even this victory "was a small wisp of balm on a large wound." □

Israel: U.S. succumbed to Syria

NEW YORK (JTA) — Israel's ambassador to the United Nations criticized the United States for not opposing a Security Council meeting called by Syria on Yom Kippur eve.

"I was very outraged and dismayed at the fact that the Security Council decided to hold this meeting, and the American ambassador" — who currently is the Security Council's president — "succumbed so easily to Syria," Dan Gillerman said.

Syria called the meeting to present a resolution blasting Israel's attack on an Islamic Jihad training camp near Damascus, following a suicide bombing in Haifa carried out by the terrorist group.

The Americans did enable the debate to start early so Israeli officials could leave in time for the holiday, Gillerman said. □

JEWISH WORLD

Dean hires Jewish affairs adviser

Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean hired an adviser on relations with the Jewish community. Dean, a former governor of Vermont, hired Matthew Dorf, a partner in Rabinowitz Media and a former Washington bureau chief for JTA.

Dorf said Dean always had planned to reach out to the Jewish community, and the appointment was not a direct result of fallout from recent comments in which Dean suggested the White House should be less supportive of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel to U.S. Jews: Help!

An Israeli official urged American Jews to lobby the United States to oppose anti-Israel resolutions at the United Nations.

"This is the time to exert as much pressure as possible," Dan Gillerman, Israel's U.N. ambassador, said in a conference call with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations on Wednesday. A Syrian-sponsored resolution condemning Israel for its attack on a terrorist training camp near Damascus is faltering, but Israel fears future resolutions demanding, for example, that Israel cease building its West Bank security fence or implement the "road map" peace plan, Gillerman said.

The Americans may feel pressured to support such resolutions to "give something to the Arab side," Gillerman warned.

Fifth-century relic found

The remnants of a fifth-century synagogue were discovered in Albania. Working together with Albanian counterparts, Hebrew University researchers found mosaics, including one showing a menorah flanked by a shofar and an etrog.

The synagogue, found in the city of Saranda, across from the Greek island of Corfu, was converted into a church at a later stage, archaeologists believe.

Canadian media giant dies

Israel "Izzy" Asper, a Canadian media giant and pro-Israel activist, died Tuesday in Winnipeg at 71.

Asper's empire included Canada's Global television network and more than 60 Canadian newspapers and news outlets worldwide. Asper was a staunch defender of Israel and a backer of Canada's Liberal Party. He also was a strong supporter of Winnipeg's Canadian Museum for Human Rights, currently under construction.

Asper's parents settled in Manitoba in the 1920s after fleeing anti-Semitism in what is today Ukraine. Asper also was a benefactor of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and founded the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies.

PROFILE

Scientist and Russian Jewish atheist, Vitaly Ginzburg, shares Nobel in physics

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — In 1947, Vitaly Ginzburg, the Russian Jewish scientist who received the Nobel Prize in physics this week, expected Soviet authorities to come and arrest him.

During the anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by Stalin after World War II, Ginzburg said, "my name was often mentioned in the newspapers among other prominent 'cosmopolitans.'" "Cosmopolitans" was the Soviet propaganda word used to denounce Jews and others accused as "agents of imperialism and Zionism."

Ginzburg said he narrowly escaped arrest, and his academic career suffered for a while.

Despite the anti-Semitism he experienced then, Ginzburg is among a handful of older academics who have been involved in rebuilding Russian Jewish life since the collapse of communism.

Ginzburg, 87, has been a member of the board of directors of the Russian Jewish Congress since the organization was started in 1996. He's the oldest member of the group's Public Advisory Council, which is made up of prominent figures in arts, science and sports.

The scientist is well known for his passionate stand against anti-Semitism and his support of secular Jewish identity and the state of Israel. RJC leaders described Ginzburg as one of the most active and passionate men among the group's lay leadership.

"He is one of those Jewish leaders who is extremely active in propagating the idea of a secular Jewry," said Yevgeny Satanovsky, the RJC's president.

Ginzburg was given the prize "for pioneering contributions to the theory of superconductors and superfluids," according to a release by the Nobel Prize committee. He will share the prize with another Russian scientist, Alexei Abrikosov, now working in the United States, and a British-born American researcher, Anthony Leggett.

A physicist and astrophysicist, Ginzburg has worked at the Moscow-based Lebedev Physical Institute since 1940. He also taught at Gorky State University.

His academic work has included research into superconductivity, theories of radio-wave propagation, radio astronomy and the origin of cosmic rays.

Early in his career, Ginzburg was an ardent believer in science and a critic of religious worldviews. To his credit, Jewish leaders say, such views did not preclude a deep devotion to the Jewish people.

Ginzburg never shunned his Jewish background, even though in recent years he has become especially active in his atheism, publishing several articles on the subject.

Ginzburg doesn't like to compromise when it comes to atheism, Satanovsky said.

Satanovsky recalled that when the RJC board voted last year on a statement of solidarity with Israel, Ginzburg argued strenuously against a line in which Jewish leaders offered a prayer for the well-being of the Jewish state.

Ginzburg is co-chairman of the Society for Solidarity With the People of Israel, a pro-Israel advocacy group of Russian Jews created in 2002 to enlist Russian public support for Israel.

Last year, Ginzburg got involved in a heated argument with another Nobel Prize winner, Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, after Solzhenitsyn published a book devoted to Russian Jewish history. Many in the Jewish community found the book, "Two Hundred Years Together," to be biased against Jews.

Ginzburg raised the issue at an RJC board meetings, Satanovsky said, and later persuaded the group to allocate funds toward the publication of a book challenging anti-Jewish statements in Solzhenitsyn's writings.

In a telephone interview on Tuesday evening, hours after his share of the \$1.3 million prize was announced, Ginzburg said he would give the money to his young great-grandsons.

The sum appeared like a lot to him, as it would "to any Russian who is not a crook or a business magnate," he said. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

With simple decision on fence, Sharon takes boldest step yet

By Leslie Susser

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision in early October to complete the security fence between Israel and the West Bank may have seemed like a formality. But it may well turn out to be the most important decision of his 30-year political career.

At any rate, Saturday's deadly suicide bombing in Haifa — which left 19 Israelis dead — showed why Sharon could not have continued procrastinating.

For months, Sharon had avoided making a final decision on the fence. He didn't want a showdown with the Americans over the route, and he was concerned about political implications.

Though he continues to insist that the fence is just a security barrier against Palestinian terrorists, Sharon knows that the monumental construction could have major implications for future political arrangements between Israel and the Palestinians: It could dictate future borders or, at the very least, serve as a starting point for negotiations on their demarcation.

In addition, some analysts believe, the fence could trigger an inexorable process leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the other side, consistent with the vision of the Oslo peace process — even though Sharon does not agree with Oslo's parameters.

Sharon had been caught on the horns of a dilemma: If he routed the fence along the pre-1967 border, known as the "Green Line," he risked paving the way for a Palestinian state in all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. That would antagonize the settler movement, cause considerable unrest in Sharon's own Likud Party and return Israel's densely populated coastal plain to dimensions so narrow that former Foreign Minister Abba Eban once labeled them "Auschwitz borders."

On the other hand, if the fence cut deeply into the West Bank to encircle cities such as Ariel, Sharon risked confrontation with the Bush administration and deductions from \$9 billion in promised U.S. loan guarantees.

Until his decision in early October, Sharon had been playing for time — but Saturday's suicide bombing confirmed that that was no longer an option. With no end in sight to Palestinian terrorism, public pressure on Sharon to complete the fence has become overwhelming.

Former Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna, a former mayor of Haifa, put his finger on the public pulse.

"Sharon is not to blame for the terror," he declared at the scene of the carnage. "But he is responsible for providing security for Israel's citizens."

Sharon's creative solution was to route the fence around the large settlements but, for the time being, not to join up the parts deep in Palestinian territory with the main fence running more or less along the Green Line. The plan is to erect horseshoe-shaped fences around the settlements and then — unless the Palestinians have had a radical change of heart and abandoned terrorism — link them to the main fence in six months to a year.

That will buy Sharon some time from the Bush administration. According to some analysts, Sharon is banking on the

American position on the fence route softening over time, the way it did on the Israel Defense Forces' reoccupation of Palestinian cities after waves of suicide bombings.

"Once, they adamantly opposed the IDF's incursion into" Palestinian-controlled territories, "and now they accept the reoccupation as a fact of life," Aluf Benn wrote of the Americans in the Ha'aretz newspaper. "In another six to eight months, when the fence issue will again come up for debate, President Bush will be fighting for his political life in the election campaign and it is doubtful he'll take the time to pressure Israel."

Sharon's longer-term strategy is to use the fence to contain Palestinian terrorism until a Palestinian leadership emerges that is sincerely interested in a peace deal. He also is confident that, when the chips are down, the Americans will back him.

Domestically, the most vehement criticism of the fence route comes from the Israeli left. Labor legislator Matan Vilnai says that building a fence with gaps left by the unconnected horseshoes is absurd and will leave central Israel vulnerable to terrorism.

Moreover, opposition members charge, the added length of the fence means that more soldiers will be needed to defend it, it will take longer to build and it will cost about four times as much.

There also is the question of Israel's image.

Chemi Shalev of the Ma'ariv newspaper says the longer route will prove to be a huge public relations gaffe, creating an image of Israel "as annexationist, unilateralist, imprisoning thousands of Palestinians behind walls of concrete."

Worse, Shalev says, the route isolates an estimated 75,000 Palestinians in enclaves on the Israeli side of the fence.

"This route is good — on condition that the only negotiations we hold are with ourselves," Shalev wrote.

It's ironic, then, that by building the fence — even along the longer route — Sharon's right-wing government is carrying out the policies of Israel's left-wing: dividing the Land of Israel along the lines of former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's proposals for territorial compromise with the Palestinians, later endorsed in the "Clinton parameters" of December 2000.

Those proposals recommended Israel annex land belonging to about 80 percent of settlers — essentially drawing the border to encompass them — and removing settlements on the other side.

Some analysts go further, predicting that the fence inevitably will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

They paint the following scenario: The fence succeeds as a security barrier, blocking attacks inside Israel. The Palestinians turn against the settlers outside the fence, and the Israeli soldiers defending them. Pressure mounts in Israel for the soldiers to be withdrawn and the settlements evacuated, as it did in the last years of Israel's occupation of its southern Lebanon security zone.

The international community pressures Israel to withdraw, asking what the army is doing in the West Bank now that terrorist attacks on Israel proper have ceased.

Under enormous domestic and international pressure, the IDF redeploys behind the fence, the government dismantles all the settlements on the other side and the Palestinians establish an independent state. The two sides then enter negotiations over residual Palestinian demands.

In other words, according to this scenario, Sharon's fence could bring the parties back to the parameters of the Oslo process — even though Sharon rejects that deal as a historical blunder. □

(Leslie Susser is the diplomatic correspondent of the Jerusalem Report.)