

IN THE NEWS

Bush signs anti-Semitism bill

President Bush signed into law a bill that requires the U.S. State Department to document anti-Semitic attacks around the world each year.

Bush signed the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act of 2004 into law Saturday.

"This nation will keep watch, and will make sure that the ancient impulse of anti-Semitism never finds a home in the modern world," he said at a campaign stop in West Palm Beach, Fla., later that day.

The act requires the State Department to create an office to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and to file a report on anti-Semitic incidents around the world.

The State Department opposed the legislation, suggesting it would show favoritism toward the Jewish community in human rights reporting.

U.S. court tosses cases against Generali

A federal judge dismissed Holocaust-era lawsuits against a major Italian insurer.

[Story, Pg. 3]

Muslim cleric sentenced to 23 years

A U.S. court sentenced a leading Muslim critic of Israel to 23 years in prison for his role in a plot to assassinate a Saudi leader.

Abdurahman Al-Amoudi, a founder of the American Muslim Council and president of the American Muslim Federation, admitted to contacting Saudi dissidents in London on behalf of Libyan agents who wanted to kill Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah.

"I regret my involvement in everything unlawful I did," Al-Amoudi said last Friday at his sentencing in a district court in Alexandria, Va.

A naturalized U.S. citizen who was born in Eritrea, Al-Amoudi organized an anti-Israel rally in Washington after the launch of the Palestinian intifada in 2000.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

French politico faces firing for calling existence of gas chambers debatable

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — Bruno Gollnisch has spent years preparing himself to take up the mantle of French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Now he appears to have outdone even his master in provocative remarks about Jews and the Holocaust.

Gollnisch, Le Pen's likely successor as head of the National Front party, said Monday that the existence of Nazi gas chambers was a matter of legitimate debate for historians.

"There isn't a serious historian around who totally sticks by the conclusions of the Nuremberg Trials," Gollnisch told a press conference in Lyon on Monday. "I'm not questioning the existence of concentration camps, but on the number of deaths, historians can discuss it. As to whether gas chambers existed, that's up to the historians to determine."

The remarks could see Gollnisch removed from his post as a professor at the University of Lyon III, while the European Parliament could sanction Gollnisch, who is also a member of the legislative body.

Such action would mirror disciplinary action taken by the European Parliament in 1997 which lifted Le Pen's parliamentary immunity after the National Front leader repeated comments describing the Holocaust as a "detail" of World War II.

Gollnisch's remarks followed the publication last week of a government report that accused the University of Lyon III of systematically tolerating academics who advocated Holocaust denial.

Gollnisch teaches Japanese at the university and is one of a number of far-right academics associated with the institution since it was created in 1973.

The report was commissioned by former Education Minister Jack Lang in 2002 and chaired by the historian Henry Rousso.

While the report's conclusions noted that the university "was not a fascist campus," it went on to say the school had, during the course of its existence, provided "shelter for a far-right kernel" of academics among its staff.

Lyon III has often been at the center of controversy over the legitimacy of academic debate regarding the Holocaust.

In a notable example in 1985, Jean-Paul Alard, a professor at the university, approved a student thesis that denied killings were carried out in concentration camps during World War II.

And in 1990, the university awarded a student a bachelor's degree with an honors citation after the student submitted a thesis shining a favorable light on the life of Georges Montandon. An academic who studied racial theory in the 1930s,

Montandon was responsible for providing certificates of "Aryanness" during the Nazi occupation of France.

For his part, Gollnisch this week also chose to attack Rousso's impartiality.

Rousso was "a Jewish personality, a respected historian, but his neutrality cannot be assured," Gollnisch said.

Such remarks were slammed by Jewish and anti-racist groups with the CRIF umbrella organization of French Jews, which

Continued on page 2

FOCUS
ON
ISSUES

■ *European Parliament member says questioning gas chambers is legitimate*

Continued from page 1
called them a "double provocation."

Gollnisch had "called into doubt the existence of the gas chambers and questioned the legitimacy of an academic by the sole fact of his Jewish origins," CRIF said in a statement.

Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary-general of the European Jewish Congress, told JTA that Gollnisch's comments showed that "this man, who calls himself a scholar, is totally ignorant of history."

"There weren't just concentration camps, there were extermination camps; every reputable historian accepts that as a fact," he said, adding that Gollnisch's comments were "not academic, but politically and ideologically based."

The Paris-based International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, known by its French acronym, LICRA, called on the European Parliament to take action against Gollnisch.

In a letter to Parliament President Josep Borrell on Wednesday, LICRA's president, Patrick Gaubert, asked the legislature to enforce sanctions against Gollnisch "for his revisionist comments which place in doubt the historical veracity of the existence of the gas chambers."

The letter drew a quick response from Borrell, who condemned Gollnisch's remarks in a statement to the European Parliament session on Thursday.

Directly addressing Gollnisch, Borrell said he was "ashamed" to have heard a European legislator making "scandalous

claims" regarding the existence of gas chambers.

"I hope you will be held accountable for your slanders by the courts," Borrell added.

Gollnisch's remarks are not the first time he has strayed into controversial territory.

In 1991, he called for "the respect of freedom of expression for educators who exercise a critical perspective towards the history of the Second World War."

And in 1996, Gollnisch publicly praised French soldiers who fought alongside the Nazis on the Eastern Front during World War II.

The remarks are likely to heat up the increasingly vicious battle within the National Front regarding who will succeed Le Pen when he decides to retire.

While Le Pen has denied any intention to step down, the party is currently split between its traditionalist wing, led by Gollnisch, and the so-called modernizers gathered around Le Pen's daughter, Marine.

Those close to Marine Le Pen immediately drew on Gollnisch's comments to place in doubt his fitness as a potential future party leader.

Eric Iorio, who is responsible for election strategy for the party, said that "if

Gollnisch wants to appear as a historical reprobate, he should do it in a personal capacity, not as a personality and a future president of the National Front."

Another senior party figure suggested that Gollnisch "only needs now to put on a hood and dress like the Ku Klux Klan."

In the meantime, Lyon III has distanced itself from Gollnisch's remarks and called on Education Minister Francois Fillon to initiate disciplinary measures against Gollnisch.

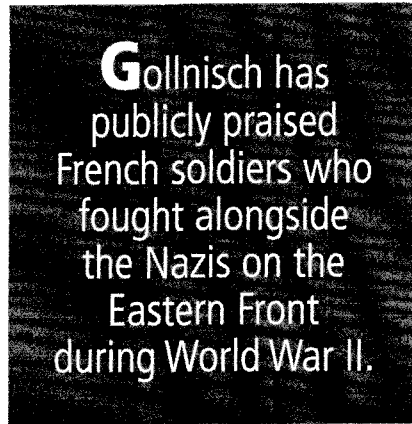
"These remarks are as much unacceptable in themselves as they are for the serious attack they bring upon the honor and credit of the university," Lyon III's president, Guy Lavorel, said in a statement Wednesday.

The inability to find backing even within his own milieu seemed to have at least brought the point home to Gollnisch.

"I don't know if I'm going to be chased out of my chair in Japanese or even put in prison for this phrase, but I assume responsibility for it," he said.

He did not, however, apologize.

Attacking what he described as the "thought police" and the "considerable interests who want to prevent this debate," Gollnisch said it was "in the interests of the State of Israel to have endless discussions about reparations." ■



French journalists speak for Israel

By PHILIP CARMEL

PARIS (JTA) — Journalists at France's international radio network slammed the station's news director for attacking Jews and the State of Israel.

The SNJ and CFTD unions at Radio France International said Saturday that remarks by Alain Menargues during an interview concerning his book "Sharon's Wall" were "unacceptable."

During the interview on Radio Courtoisie on Oct. 12, Menargues asked listeners to check out the Book of Leviticus, adding: "It's the separation of the pure and the

impure. A Jew who wants to pray has to be pure. Anything that runs contrary to that purity has to be separated. Read Leviticus, it's written in black and white."

He then added that Jews had created the world's first-ever ghetto in Venice "to separate themselves off from the rest."

The comments come less than a week after Menargues referred to Israel as "a racist state" during another radio interview.

In a statement Saturday, the SNJ union said Menargues' comments have "provoked anger and rejection among the staff" at Radio France. ■

JTA
WORLD
REPORT

Howard E. Friedman
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more 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 with permission.

THIS WEEK**MONDAY**

■ Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) and first lady Laura Bush address the United Jewish Communities Lion of Judah conference in Washington. The conference gathers 1,200 major women donors from around the country, and attendees will ask questions about the many women's issues that arose in the last presidential debate, including questions on health care and homeland security. Candidate John Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, addressed the conference on Sunday, and Sen. Hilary Clinton (D-N.Y.) will address the conference on Tuesday.

■ The 20th Anniversary Israeli Film Festival continues in New York through Oct. 28. A listing of films and times can be found at www.israelfilmfestival.com.

WEDNESDAY

■ A U.S. District Court in Miami is set to hear arguments on claims by Hungarian Holocaust survivors for compensation for belongings that had been looted by Nazis and confiscated by the U.S. military. The survivors sued the government because the United States never made any attempt to return the belongings to the survivors.

THURSDAY

■ Two leading Washington clerics, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Rabbi Bruce Lustig of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, join a Palestinian mother and an Israeli mother who set up the Bereaved Families Forum after they lost children during the past four years of violence between Palestinians and Israelis.

FRIDAY

■ Four leading Christian clerics from Jerusalem will launch a weekend conference in Washington on the challenges facing the shrinking Christian community in the Holy Land.

SUNDAY

■ The American Israel Public Affairs Committee launches a two-day major donors conference in Hollywood, Fla. Just over a week before the election, the closed conference will hear from Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, and Richard Holbrooke, a top foreign policy adviser to John Kerry.

■ Top Democratic Jewish surrogates for John Kerry's presidential campaign plan a Jewish "blitz" in Ohio, hoping to persuade Jewish voters in this crucial swing state to vote for the Massachusetts senator. A similar effort in Florida last month drew thousands of voters to packed synagogues and homes for the elderly.

■ The Jewish Agency begins its four-day board of governors meetings in Israel. The group plans to approve an interim five-month budget. Carole Solomon, chairman of the agency's board of governors, would not give any details of the budget, but said it would be a balanced one. The group is expected to increase its contribution to birthright Israel.

Judge throws out survivor cases

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — After nearly 60 years of petitions and a decade of litigation, many survivors and their descendants seeking to collect on Holocaust-era life insurance policies have had their hopes dashed.

Last week, a New York federal judge threw out the cases against Assicurazioni Generali, one of Europe's largest insurers.

In their lawsuits against Generali, plaintiffs in California, New York, Florida and Wisconsin charged that the Italian company had stonewalled their claims for decades or fobbed them off with meager settlement offers.

Over the years, 20 class-action and individual suits against Generali had been combined and assigned to U.S. District Judge Michael Mukasey.

In his Oct. 14 ruling, Mukasey dismissed all of the cases, ruling that the president and executive branch of government — rather than state or federal courts — had jurisdiction over Holocaust-era claims against foreign companies or governments.

In earlier preliminary rulings, Mukasey had appeared to favor the survivors' cases, but the legal playing field tilted last year when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a pro-survivor California law as unconstitutional meddling by a state in foreign affairs.

The U.S. government, Generali and other European insurers have maintained all along that all claims should be submitted and resolved through the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims.

However, the commission has been under persistent fire from survivors and their lawyers, who have charged it — in the media and lawsuits — with foot-dragging and serving as a front for the insurance companies.

Mukasey himself, in an earlier statement, described the commission as a "company store" for the insurance companies.

The judge's ruling was met with considerable bitterness. Ebi Gabor, a plaintiff who had not heard of the court decision, described the legal blow as "very, very painful."

The 77-year-old Holocaust survivor from Hungary said, "We have waited for 60 years for the insurance payments due us, and every year we have filled out more papers. This is a big shock."

Manny Steinberg, 79, said, "When I was a young child, the Generali agent came to my father's ladies custom tailoring store in Radom, Poland, every two weeks to collect \$2 or \$3 in insurance premiums," he said. "And while we were in camp, my father kept reminding me, 'If we get out, there is an insurance policy waiting.'"

Responding to the court ruling, Steinberg, who spent six years in ghettos and concentration camps, said, "We could use the insurance money, but that's not the main point. I am so disappointed that Holocaust survivors are being dragged down once again."

William Shernoff, a Los Angeles-area attorney who over the last decade has filed suits on behalf of 18 survivor families, described the ruling as "a sad day for justice, when Holocaust survivors are denied access to American courts in their lifelong struggle to collect on life insurance policies long overdue from Generali."

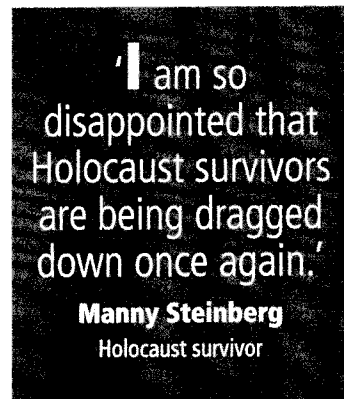
In a statement, Shernoff denounced the argument that his lawsuits interfered

with the foreign relations authority of the executive branch.

"Holocaust survivors cannot understand how their simple lawsuits against a private company can possibly interfere with President Bush's ability to conduct foreign affairs with Italy. They think that's absurd," Shernoff declared. He vowed to appeal the judge's decision to higher courts.

By contrast, Kenneth Bialkin, the attorney for Generali — and a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations — hailed the ruling during a phone interview as "sound and sensitive, in Generali's view."

He added that "Generali's position has been very honorable and it will continue to process all claims, through established" International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims "channels. Generali has not changed its intention to pay all justified claims."



NEWS IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

Poll: Israelis back withdrawal plan

Nearly two in three Israelis back Ariel Sharon's plan to leave the Gaza Strip and some of the West Bank, a poll found.

According to the weekend survey by Channel Ten television, 65 percent of Israelis would vote in favor of the disengagement plan were a referendum held today, while 35 percent would be opposed.

Calls on Sharon to hold a referendum have mounted, but so far the prime minister has said he will make do with a Knesset vote on the plan scheduled for Oct. 25.

Arab parties split on disengagement

Two Israeli Arab parties disagreed on whether to support Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan.

The United Arab List, which holds two Knesset seats, announced Sunday it would vote on Oct. 25 in favor of a Gaza Strip pullback.

But the three-member Hadash faction said it would oppose the plan.

"We have no intention of helping the prime minister deepen the occupation in the West Bank," Hadash lawmaker Ahmed Tibi told Israel Radio.

Another Arab party, Balad, has yet to decide how it will vote.

Back to Gaza?

Israel said it will storm the Gaza Strip again if Palestinian rocket fire resumes.

"I gave the military an order to deploy in preparation to re-enter Gaza if necessary," Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told the Cabinet on Sunday.

Israeli forces reoccupied much of northern Gaza for more than two weeks after a rocket fired by Hamas killed two infants in the town of Sderot.

Mofaz was quoted as saying another such salvo would warrant going back into Gaza.

NORTH AMERICA

Scowcroft: Sharon 'mesmerizes' Bush

The first President Bush's national security adviser said his old boss' son is "mesmerized" by Ariel Sharon.

"Sharon just has him wrapped around his little finger," Brent Scowcroft said in an interview last week with the Financial Times.

Scowcroft said President Bush's acquiescence to the Israeli prime minister's plan to leave Gaza was a mistake.

"Sharon will say: 'I want to get out of Gaza, finish the wall [the Israeli security barrier] and say I'm done.'"

Berman to Presbyterians: No thanks

A Jewish congressman rejected an offer to discuss the Presbyterian General Assembly's decision to divest from Israel.

Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) led 15 congressmen last month in condemning the Presbyterian G.A.'s decision.

In a reply, the church stood firm in its July decision to divest from companies trading with Israel, but offered to discuss the issue.

"It has been very disappointing to us that the U.S. Congress has not proven to be an ally or a balanced arbiter in the negotiations for peace in the region," the letter to Berman said.

Berman said he would continue to pursue dialogue with Presbyterian ministers and lay leaders, but said the letter from the church's Washington office turned him off.

WORLD

French official visits Israel

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said Israel would only achieve peace if it stops occupying Palestinian territories.

Speaking at a Foreign Ministry seminar of Israeli and French journalists in Paris last Friday, Barnier said that "peace for Israelis will follow the renunciation of occupation."

Barnier also warned Israel that it would have to deal with the European Union as a political force for peace in the Middle East if it wanted cooperation on economic matters.

Muslim cleric to stand trial

A British Muslim cleric who has been implicated in terror attacks, and who has claimed the Sept. 11 attacks were a Jewish plot, is to face trial in Britain.

Abu Hamza Al-Masri has been fighting extradition to the United States since his May arrest on 11 charges that included involvement in a 1998 Yemen hostage crisis and trying to establish an Al-Qaida training camp in Oregon.

But British authorities are now expected to formally charge him, a move likely to upset U.S. attempts to bring the 47-year-old Egyptian-born imam to trial.

France upset over warning shots

France formally protested to Israel after an Israeli tank fired warning shots near a French diplomat at a crossing point into the Gaza Strip.

"This type of act is unacceptable particularly when it applies to officials holding diplomatic passports who have carried out all the formalities demanded by the Israeli army," the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement sent to formally protest to the Israeli Embassy in Paris last Friday.

The ministry alleged that shots were fired around 20 yards away from France's deputy consul general in Jerusalem as he was passing through the Erez crossing point.

Hungarians mark rise of fascism

A coalition of groups staged an anti-fascist rally in Budapest.

Hungarian Jewish groups joined with human rights organizations and political parties last Friday to mark the 60th anniversary of the rise to power of Ferenc Szalasi's pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party and the ensuing genocide of Hungary's Jews and Gypsies.

The anti-fascist rally was called after Hungarian pro-Nazis announced plans to celebrate Szalasi.

Hungarian police revoked the fascists' rally permit.

E.U.: Trade accord with Israel OK

The European Union said it would not suspend a trade agreement with Israel, despite a call by a senior U.N. official to do so.

Jean Ziegler, the U.N. special rapporteur on the right to food, had written to the outgoing president of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, that Israel was abusing its association agreement with the union by "violating" Palestinians' right to food.

Anti-Semitic incidents in Brazil

A Brazilian synagogue was vandalized with anti-Semitic slurs. Swastikas and phrases like "Kill all Jews" were painted recently on the walls of Sociedade Israelita de Campinas, a synagogue in the city of Campinas.

According to the synagogue's president, Marcelo Firer, other recent threats had been made by letters and phone calls.

In Rio de Janeiro, newly elected councilwoman Teresa Bergher received a letter last week with her own campaign fliers and leaflets painted with swastikas and words like "Kill the Jews."