

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM IS UNDER FIRE FOR INVITING CROATIAN PRESIDENT

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 21 (JTA) -- A storm of controversy has erupted over the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's decision to invite Croatian President Franjo Tudjman to take part in the museum's dedication ceremonies Thursday.

Tudjman, who has written a book questioning the extent of the Holocaust and who has publicly made anti-Semitic remarks, was one of more than a dozen heads of state invited to Thursday's ceremonies by directors of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, which built the museum.

Elie Wiesel, the Nobel laureate and founding chairman of the council, expressed disgust at the invitation and said he would "speak out in outrage" against it when he delivered one of the keynote speeches at Thursday's ceremonies.

"I believe Tudjman's presence in the midst of survivors is a disgrace," Wiesel told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on Wednesday.

"This is a man who has published statements about the Holocaust that helped those who deny its very existence. His place tomorrow is not among those who grieve and remember."

Jewish organizational leaders, many of whom took part in a meeting with Tudjman on Tuesday, also expressed deep concern about the Croatian leader's inclusion in the ceremonies.

But a museum spokeswoman suggested that including Tudjman in the ceremonies might help changes his views about Jews and the Holocaust.

"We are aware of Mr. Tudjman's writings on the subjects of Jews and the Holocaust," said Naomi Paiss, director of communications for the museum, "but Mr. Tudjman will be touring the museum Thursday after the ceremony, and we think he might change his mind."

"We are not opening the museum to preach to the choir," Paiss said. She added that someone like Tudjman perhaps "needs education" on the subject of the Holocaust more than others and that education is one of the museum's purposes.

Claims Book Was 'Misinterpreted'

Paiss said that decisions on whom to invite to the dedication ceremony were based in large part on recommendations from the U.S. State Department. She said the department had advised the museum, in the case of the former Yugoslavia, to invite representatives from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia.

Tudjman is author of a book titled "Wastelands -- Historical Truth," in which he said that the figure of "up to 6 million dead is founded too much on both emotional, biased testimonies and on exaggerated data in the postwar reckonings of war crimes."

He was also once quoted as saying that Jews are "selfish, crafty, unreliable, miserly and underhanded."

But in a 1992 letter to World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman, Tudjman claimed that his book had been "misinterpreted either as historical revisionism or as anti-Semitism. As a former anti-fascist fighter and a committed democrat, I refute all intentions of the kind."

In the letter, Tudjman also spoke of the

"friendship between the Croatian and Jewish people" and said, "We deeply regret the fact that the Jewish people in Croatia suffered the tragic fate of the Holocaust during World War II."

In an apparent further effort to clear his name, Tudjman met Tuesday with representatives of a number of Jewish organizations, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith and National Council of Jewish Women.

Did Not Allay Leaders' Concerns

But the meeting did not seem to alleviate many of the Jewish leaders' concerns about the Croatian president.

"I can't say he allayed all our fears directly," said Phil Baum, associate executive director of AJCongress, who took part in the meeting.

"He certainly went to great lengths to insist that he did not have any hostile views toward Jews," said Baum. "However, he didn't directly disavow or explain away those statements that we consider troubling."

"I left that meeting feeling more uncomfortable than when I arrived," said George Spectre, associate director for international, governmental and Israel affairs at B'nai Brith. "I don't think he forthrightly addressed some of the issues we raised."

A number of other Jewish groups expressed disappointment about the invitation extended to Tudjman.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said WJC affiliates around the world "have contacted us expressing dismay and surprise that this invitation was extended."

Ephraim Zuroff, Israel director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said the museum's invitation to Tudjman is "practically the antithesis of what that museum is supposed to stand for. This is a person who has publicly questioned the extent of the killings in the concentration camps."

"I cannot understand why he was invited," unless he is "coming to repudiate what he has previously written and to express contrition for the statements he has made," said Zuroff. "But our understanding is that he is a Holocaust revisionist."

ARABS AGREE TO RETURN TO PEACE TALKS, AND ISRAEL SAYS IT MADE NO CONCESSIONS
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 21 (JTA) -- The Arabs' decision to return to the Middle East peace talks has vindicated the Clinton administration's stubborn refusal to press Israel for further concessions, according to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Reacting to an announcement Wednesday by the Arab states and the Palestinians that they would return to Washington for a ninth round of peace talks next Tuesday, Rabin said that, contrary to media reports, Israel had not agreed to make any further gestures in order to lure the Palestinians back to the talks.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres confirmed that no concessions would be forthcoming beyond the deal worked out with the United States in early February regarding the gradual return of

Palestinian activists deported by Israel to Lebanon last December.

But he hinted that some gestures by Israel might be made once the negotiations actually resume in Washington.

The Arab decision to return to the talks was announced Wednesday in Damascus by Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.

Hours later, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced in Washington that all parties to the talks would show up there for the ninth round of negotiations next Tuesday, a week later than originally planned.

Christopher welcomed the Arab decision. He said a number of countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, played important roles in persuading the Palestinians to resume the talks, which had been stalled for four months.

The previous round ended in mid-December and never resumed following Israel's expulsion of 415 Moslem extremists from the administered territories.

Last month, the United States and Russia invited the parties to return to the talks April 20. But the Palestinians refused, listing a number of unsatisfied demands, and the Arab states had little choice but to close ranks behind them.

A Dispute Over 'Assets'

The issue of Israeli gestures or concessions to the Palestinians had been a focus of the efforts to get the stalled talks resumed.

In a debate Wednesday in the Knesset, Health Minister Haim Ramon sharply attacked the Palestinians for "negotiating prior to negotiating."

But Ramon, a member of the Labor Party, promised that in the peace negotiations themselves Israel would offer concessions for peace.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, in his new role as leader of the opposition, criticized numerous gestures the government had already undertaken toward the Palestinians.

Listing 19 such concessions, Netanyahu said the most dangerous was Israel's willingness to include Jerusalem resident Faisal Husseini in the Palestinian delegation.

The proposed move, Netanyahu claimed, would in effect be interpreted as a signal that eastern Jerusalem would be considered as part of the territory to be placed under Palestinian autonomy.

"The Berlin Wall has fallen, and now you are trying to rebuild the Jerusalem Wall," said the Likud chairman.

But Rabin and other Labor Party leaders have repeatedly said that Jerusalem would remain united under complete Israeli sovereignty and that the acceptance of Husseini as a peace negotiator would not affect that longstanding Israeli position in the least.

Ramon said the real dispute between the government and Likud is over what "assets" Likud is blaming the government of "selling out."

"I understand that you define as an asset the fact that every morning, some 120,000 Palestinians from the territories come to Israel," said Ramon.

"You also regard as an asset the annexation of 2 million Palestinians to Israel, whereas I really admit that I want to get rid of those assets."

"You regard the Jabalya refugee camp as an asset, and we regard it as just the opposite," he

said, referring to a teeming Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

There were also divisions in the Palestinian camp. Two original members of the Palestinian negotiating team, Ghassan al-Khatib and Samir Abdullah, announced Wednesday that they were quitting, in protest of the decision to return to the talks with Israel.

NEWS OF PEACE TALKS IN WASHINGTON TRIGGERS ANYTHING BUT PEACE IN GAZA By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 21 (JTA) -- News that the Middle East peace talks would be resuming in Washington next week touched off violence in the Gaza Strip, where at least one Arab was killed and at least 30 injured in clashes Wednesday with Israeli soldiers.

Stone-throwing riots broke out at the Nuseirat refugee camp, following the army's installation of a new observation post. Angry residents demanded that the post be removed and, after the army refused, stoned the new lookout.

The army reacted by shooting live ammunition, killing Mohammad Abu-Shawish, 16, and wounding others. Similar clashes broke out in Khan Yunis and Gaza City, where a 17-year-old Palestinian, Wael Saed, reportedly died after being shot in the head.

The incidents came a day after the Reuters news agency filmed border police officers beating a 14-year-old Palestinian youth at the Shati refugee camp, near Gaza City, for no apparent reason.

The youth reportedly was on his way to work when he was ordered out of the car he was traveling in and immediately attacked by three border policemen, who slapped him in the face and kicked him.

A local free-lance photographer working for Reuters filmed the incident, and the footage was aired Tuesday around the world, including on Israel Television.

In reaction to the incident, the four border policemen were suspended and grounded.

In addition, the division for police investigation at the Justice Ministry launched an investigation into the matter.

Police Inspector-General Rafi Peled said he regarded the incident as very "grave," but added that the behavior of the officers was a deviation from the normal practice of the border police.

As the general closure of the territories entered its fourth week, the government announced Wednesday it intended to grant Palestinians 8,000 more work permits allowing them into Israel next Tuesday, after Independence Day.

Five thousand construction workers and an additional 3,000 farm workers would be allowed in. The government has already been allowing in a few thousand farm workers in the past week. A proposal to recruit 1,000 foreign workers was rejected.

However, the added numbers are still a far cry from meeting the needs of Israeli employers and do not solve the mass unemployment problem in the territories. Before the closure, some 120,000 Palestinians from the territories had jobs in Israel proper.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, returning Wednesday from Poland, said the closure had justified itself beyond all expectations and that it would continue as long as Israel's security needs make it necessary.

**COURT HEARS HATE CRIMES CASE,
LEAVING JEWISH GROUPS HOPEFUL**

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, April 21 (JTA) -- Jewish groups expressed guarded optimism this week about the future outcome of a Supreme Court case that could affect the fate of hate crimes statutes around the country.

The court heard oral argument Wednesday in a case called *Wisconsin vs. Mitchell* that centers on the constitutionality of Wisconsin's hate crimes statute.

The statute, supported by many Jewish groups, calls for enhancing criminal penalties when perpetrators of crimes intentionally select their targets based on "race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry."

The Anti-Defamation League is especially interested in the outcome of the case, to be decided by the end of the Supreme Court term this summer, because the Wisconsin statute is based on model legislation developed by ADL that has been used in more than 20 other states around the country.

Last year, the high court unanimously struck down a St. Paul, Minn. ordinance banning cross-burning and other expressions of hate and racism.

In the St. Paul case, all nine justices agreed that the ordinance was unconstitutional, but four of the justices took issue with parts of Justice Antonin Scalia's opinion and argued that another type of hate crimes law could be constitutional.

Just a few days after that decision, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the state's hate crimes law was unconstitutional, saying it violated the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech.

But Jewish groups, many of which filed briefs in the Wisconsin case, argue that unlike the St. Paul ordinance, the Wisconsin law enhances penalties for crimes already committed and does not penalize free speech.

The Wisconsin case involves a 1989 incident in Kenosha, Wis., in which a young black man, Todd Mitchell, and a group of younger black teen-agers were discussing a scene in the film "Mississippi Burning," where a white man beats a black child.

When a white teen, Gregory Riddick, walked by, Mitchell urged the others to "go get" the "white boy." They attacked Riddick and beat him unconscious.

'There Is Reason For Optimism'

Mitchell was convicted of aggravated battery, for which he was sentenced to two years in jail. He received another two years for his motive in selecting the victim. He appealed the additional sentence, claiming the hate-crimes law penalized free speech.

After the Supreme Court heard the case Wednesday, Jewish groups expressed satisfaction with the lines of questioning taken by some justices, including Scalia, who had taken a hard line in the St. Paul case.

"It was pleasantly surprising," said Richard Foltin, legislative director and counsel for the American Jewish Committee, which filed a brief in support of Wisconsin.

"They asked questions that showed they understood the difference between last year's case and this year," Foltin said.

"I'm very pleased," said Steven Freeman, director of ADL's legal affairs department. "There is reason for optimism."

Freeman observed that Scalia had compared the Wisconsin law to laws against treason, in a way that indicated the justice saw the statute's approach as legitimate.

Scalia questioned Mitchell's attorney, Lynn Adelman, for several minutes, arguing that the motive of perpetrators is relevant in treason cases. "Unless the motive is to help the enemy," the justice said, "it is not treason."

Adelman argued throughout his half-hour appearance that the Wisconsin case "punishes thought," thereby violating the First Amendment.

But Wisconsin Attorney General James Doyle argued that his state was concerned with Mitchell's motives, not what he actually thought about race relations. "To this day the state does not know" what Mitchell thinks about the subject, Doyle told the justices.

No Attempt To 'Control Thought'

The Wisconsin statute does not punish thought, "it punishes criminal conduct," Doyle said. There is no "sinister motive to control thought" by the state, he added.

Michael Dreeben, assistant to the U.S. solicitor general, also argued on behalf of Wisconsin, stating that racially motivated crimes intimidate an entire class of people and thus are valid subjects for state legislation.

Foltin of AJCommittee said that Justice Anthony Kennedy, who was one of those taking a harder line in last year's case, "was very strong today, almost making arguments on behalf" of the Wisconsin law.

Kennedy, in his questioning of Adelman, said that thoughts are protected, but when they veer into actual action, that is a different matter.

"Many thoughts are protected as such," Kennedy said, "but cannot be put into action."

Lois Waldman, co-director of the legal department of the American Jewish Congress, said that her organization, which also filed a brief supporting Wisconsin, feels that the Wisconsin law "doesn't violate the First Amendment and is not prohibited by the court's opinion" in the St. Paul case.

The Wisconsin law, Waldman said, "is not set in motion by thoughts or speech but is triggered when someone inflicts injury" based on race or other categories defined in the statute.

Among the other groups filing briefs in support of Wisconsin were the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Jewish Advocacy Center, People for the American Way and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.

PRAYERBOOK FETCHES \$1.5 MILLION

JERUSALEM, April 21 (JTA) -- Machzor Rome, a lavishly illuminated 15th-century Italian-Hebrew manuscript of festival prayers, fetched a record \$1,157,500 at a Judaica auction in Tel Aviv last week.

Considered one of the finest Italian Jewish Renaissance manuscripts, the work was offered by an anonymous American collector and purchased by an unidentified private non-Israeli collector.

The auction, the eighth held in Tel Aviv by Sotheby's international house, took in a total \$2,378,000, double the amount brought last year.

**SON OF NOTORIOUS NAZI OFFICIAL
MEETS WITH SURVIVORS IN ISRAEL**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 21 (JTA) -- The son of notorious Nazi leader Martin Bormann has left Israel after a four-day unpublicized visit aimed at reconciling children of Nazi criminals with children of Holocaust survivors.

Martin Bormann Jr., the eldest son of the man who played a leading role in carrying out the extermination of European Jews in his capacity as Hitler's aide, joined eight other children of Nazi war criminals in meetings with nine children of Holocaust survivors at a four-day symposium last week.

The symposium was held at Neve Shalom, a model community in which Arabs and Jews live and work together. It was arranged by a Ben-Gurion University psychologist, Professor Dan Bar-On, who is author of a book about the guilt felt by descendants of Adolf Hitler's henchmen.

Bar-On said he organized the symposium to see whether the offspring of criminals and those of their victims can coexist.

Bormann Jr., who is 63, is a former priest and current theology teacher. He was quoted in the daily Yediot Achronot as saying he found it easier to face Israelis, whose anger and pain he could accept, than present-day neo-Nazis in Germany who seek to harm him.

Bormann said he was not recognized when he visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem on Monday.

"My feeling was one of mourning, especially at the place where the names of children are listed," he said.

"A painful thought went through me, that there are thousands more victims nobody knows about. Entire families were erased."

The elder Bormann was sentenced to death in absentia at the Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1946, but where and when he died is still unclear.

One common opinion, held by the younger Bormann as well, is that the Nazi leader committed suicide in Hitler's bunker at the end of World War II. However, there was a recent report that he died of cancer in Paraguay in 1945.

Bormann Jr. said he had mixed feelings about his father.

"He was a good father to his children, and on the other hand he was an unknown quantity to me. I knew then that he had a high position but not what he really did," Bormann Jr. said.

"As a religious man, I can say that only God in heaven can judge him. I cannot," he added.

**CANARY ISLANDS ORDERS EXPULSION
OF PURVEYOR OF NEO-NAZI MATERIAL**

By Judith Lew

MADRID, April 21 (JTA) -- The government of the Canary Islands has ordered the expulsion of a Swedish citizen who is accused of leading a network there that distributes Nazi propaganda.

Diedlib Felderer is accused of spreading hate material throughout Europe from post office boxes in Arrecife, on the island of Lanzarote.

The Canary Islands constitute a region of Spain, but the expulsion order was made by the islands' local government.

But the order could not be carried out immediately, as Felderer's whereabouts were unknown.

He disappeared after his activities were

denounced last December by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and local authorities believe he might have left the island.

Shimon Samuels, the Wiesenthal Center's European representative, said Felderer works through an organization called Deutsche Kulturhaus and uses several false names to disseminate the material, which includes Third Reich publications, films, records and Nazi paraphernalia.

Samuels asked the local authorities to cancel Felderer's post office boxes and bank account in Las Palmas, the main city of the islands, on the grounds that the material could be considered obscene and therefore banned internationally.

**SOUTH AFRICAN LAWYER ASSAILS
ISRAEL AT U.N. RACISM PARLEY**

SYDNEY, Australia, April 21 (JTA) -- Prominent South African lawyer and political activist Dumisa Ntsebeza launched a stinging attack on Israel on the first working day of the United Nations Conference on Combatting Racism, held this week in Sydney.

Ntsebeza, national publicity officer of the Black Lawyers Association, claimed: "We in South Africa find various analogies between the conduct of Israel and the South African government," including "attacks on neighboring countries" and "massive removals of whole communities" to "make way for exclusively Jewish settlers."

He alleged that "world concern with anti-Semitism" has shifted attention away from Israel's record on human rights.

Ali Kazak, a Palestine Liberation Organization observer to the conference, said he supported the comments of "Brother Ntsebeza," adding he found it "quite amazing how we can fight racism without challenging and facing Zionism."

The PLO speaker said "guilt feelings toward Nazis' victims" has meant that the West "tries to avoid facing the racism of Israelis."

Israeli delegate Judith Karp attacked critics of Israel for their failure to make positive suggestions, given that "racism is in the backyard of each of us."

She urged all states to work together to fight racism and not spend the conference sessions "pointing at specific countries."

Karp went on to say that the conference must not ignore the linkage between racism and terrorism, both of which targeted individuals for their perceived relationship with identifiable groups.

The session also saw the Jordanian representative launch an impassioned attack on the role of the mass media in the United States in "using freedom of expression" to "negatively stereotype Arabs and Palestinians."

Australian academic Stephen Castles, keynote speaker at the session on "Current Themes and Major Issues Regarding Racism and Racial Discrimination: National and International Perspectives," responded, "It is difficult to take sides, but any social scientific study must accept that Israel is imposing racial policies on the minority -- there is no other way of looking at it."

The World Jewish Congress, as a non-government organization, raised concerns at the conference about the relentless persistence of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

The conference was charged with drafting resolutions on racism to go before the U.N. Human Rights Conference, scheduled for June in Vienna.