

**AMID SHELLING OF SARAJEVO,  
THE JDC EVACUATES 296 PEOPLE**  
By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- Just hours after a mortar killed more than 65 people in the worst atrocity committed in the 22-month siege of Sarajevo, a Jewish-organized, multi-ethnic convoy successfully brought nearly 300 people from the embattled Bosnian city.

The six-bus convoy, organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in partnership with Sarajevo's Jewish La Benevolencija organization, brought 296 Jews, Croats, Serbs and Muslims on a tortuous overland journey overnight from Sarajevo to Makarska, on the Croatian coast, where JDC maintains a refugee center, JDC officials said.

The group included men and women of all ages, and a few children. Among the evacuees was an elderly Muslim woman who has been designated a Righteous Gentile and her family, who have been invited to live in Israel.

About one-third of the evacuees were Jewish, leaving about 300 to 350 Jews in the city, the JDC said.

Jewish evacuees who want to go to Israel are being processed in Makarska by the Jewish Agency.

"We are so happy to have been able to bring this convoy out," JDC President Ambassador Milton Wolf told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by telephone from Makarska.

"The convoy brought out not only Jews but a multi-ethnic group that including Christian Serbs and Croats as well as Muslims," said Wolf, a former U.S. ambassador who had flown in from New York to supervise the operation and was on hand to meet the evacuees.

"Our joy in bringing out the convoy, however, is tarnished by the terrible tragedy of the shelling Saturday," he said. "It took place as our convoy was preparing for departure, and people who just got off the buses say it was horrible."

Wolf extended thanks to the governments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, to Serbian forces, to the U.N. protection force, and to the Jewish communities of Sarajevo and Zagreb, Croatia, for their help in setting up and making possible the evacuation.

He also thanked the government of France, the European Jewish Congress and the Central British Fund of London for their help.

**Rain And Mudslides**

The first of the six convoy buses was just leaving Sarajevo at 12:30 p.m. Saturday when deadly mortar shells hit Sarajevo's central market, killing and injuring hundreds.

The last bus left Sarajevo at 4 p.m. Saturday and arrived in Makarska at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, he said.

Torrential rains and mudslides on the narrow winding roads across the mountains slowed the convoy and disrupted radio telephone contact between the buses and Makarska, Wolf said.

In the first bus was Zajniba Hartaga-Susic, 77, along with her daughter, Aida, her son-in-law, Branimir, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, and her 10-year-old granddaughter, Stella.

Hartaga-Susic is a Muslim who was designated a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem in recognition of her rescue of Jews during World War II.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres personally intervened to help gain permission for Hartaga-Susic and her family to be evacuated, by formally inviting all of them, in the name of the Israeli government, to live in Israel.

The evacuation convoy was the latest in a series of air and land evacuations executed by the JDC, the operational organization for overseas Jewish aid, since the beginning of hostilities in Bosnia. These evacuations have transported about 2,200 residents of Sarajevo of all religions and ethnic groups to safe havens.

Wolf said that because of the difficulty in organizing the convoys, at this time no further evacuation was planned.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:****BEILIN INSISTS HIS AIM IN RELATIONS  
WITH AMERICANS IS NOT DESTRUCTIVE**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin insists that he wants Jewish fund raising for Israel to be reformed and not destroyed, and that he seeks a new, more honest Israel-Diaspora relationship.

He says those who characterize his campaign otherwise are distorting it out of self-interest or fear of changing the status quo.

At the same time, however, he acknowledges that changes will be painful.

Beilin unleashed a fury last month when he told an international Zionist women's group that Israel was a relatively wealthy country and should not continue asking for Diaspora "charity."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin subsequently gave a speech in which he became so angry about Beilin's remarks that he knocked one of the microphones off the podium.

Rabin since has tried to contain the damage he clearly believes Beilin has done. In speeches to visiting Diaspora groups, and in a letter-writing campaign to U.S. Jewish leaders, Rabin has gone out of his way to reaffirm the importance Israel attaches to Diaspora philanthropy.

Last week, in a speech to Hadassah leaders, he said to disregard such "noises" by "youngsters" who do not represent the position of the government of Israel.

Indeed, Rabin is making a point of calling on Jewish communities in developed countries to intensify their efforts to help finance the absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants and would-be immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Rabin, Jewish Agency officials and others have angrily protested that Beilin does not have the faintest understanding of the critical role of Diaspora fund raising.

They say its value goes far beyond the checks written and the programs sponsored. They point to the American-Israeli partnership it offers in the building of the Jewish state, which provides a vital component of Jewish identity.

Yehiel Leket, head of the Jewish Agency's department of youth aliyah, argued heatedly with

Beilin on the question of Diaspora fund raising during a recent Knesset committee meeting.

"I told him that he may understand Palestinians, but he definitely has no understanding of Jews," said Leket.

Rabin, Leket and others also claim that relieving American Jews of their responsibility to contribute to Israel threatens the \$3 billion in aid provided annually by the U.S. government.

By and large, Beilin has been dismissing the explosion over his remarks in part as a result of media distortions that claimed he was out to abolish the Jewish Agency and its international appeals.

Leket said that is disingenuous. He and others claimed Beilin has repeatedly argued that the Jewish Agency should be dismantled and then backed down when the heat turned up.

Beilin was concerned enough about the brouhaha to call a few members of the Jewish media to his Knesset office last week to clarify his position before meeting with Jewish leaders this week in the United States.

The remarks to the Women's International Zionist Organization were made, Beilin explained, because "I felt it was necessary to deliver the message that Israel is (no longer) this poor country which needs charity."

"We do not need charity, we need partnership," he said.

Continuing to portray Israel in a dismal light as a fund-raising tactic may hurt prospective immigration, he added.

But interpreting his remarks as a call to abolish the United Jewish Appeal is "really nonsense," he said.

Beilin explained that he wants to "restructure" the Israel-Diaspora relationship, against the background of the peace process and Israel's growing economic and strategic strength, and the crisis of Jewish continuity in the Diaspora.

The combined phenomena mean "we have to change the agenda of our relationship with the Diaspora," he said. "That's why I raised the issue."

But, he added, "suggesting changes is met with a kind of criticism which paints you as somebody who would like to destroy rather than reform." That, in turn, serves to protect institutions from change, he said.

"Of course, I'm not speaking about destruction," he said. "I speak about changing priorities in the Jewish appeal and the structure of Jewish organizations."

#### 'The Most Important Issue'

Beilin envisions an international organization based on the Jewish Agency, but performing "some functions not met today (and) cancelling some functions which are performed."

Existing appeals, he said, should address themselves to "the most important issue" -- the threat to Jewish continuity in the Diaspora -- and Israelis should be involved in the discussion, since "it is in the national interest of Israel to preserve Jewish continuity."

The money from the appeals can and should help pay for immigration and absorption, he said, but the bulk of it should be funneled to Diaspora Jewish education and visits to Israel for young people.

The other issues currently addressed by Diaspora philanthropy, such as agriculture and Israeli children in distress, are "mainly for Israel to deal with," he said.

"I believe we have to restructure the United Jewish Appeal and the other organizations accordingly," Beilin said.

While reiterating that he is not an expert on the issue of Jewish continuity, Beilin said it seems self-evident that Jewish education is a critical antidote to demographic disaster in an "open, liberal and democratic society" such as the United States.

"It seems to me very difficult to preserve Jewish continuity, if it is not in the context of a state like Israel, where Jewish culture and a Jewish majority make it natural," he said.

At the same time, Israel's changing political circumstances will enable it to play, for the first time, the role envisioned by its founders -- that of a safe and "normal" haven for world Jewry.

In Israel's endless wars and conflicts with its Arab neighbors, he said, "we distanced ourselves from the original Zionist dream of being a shelter to the Jewish world."

But when peace prevails, "I believe we are going to become now what was planned by people like (Theodor) Herzl and (Chaim) Weizmann 100 years ago."

Beilin anticipated resistance to such change by those invested in the status quo and in the idea of Israel under siege.

"This kind of normalization process will be very difficult to go through because we are so used to the abnormal situation" and because, "psychologically it is so difficult to adapt to a new situation," said Beilin.

But the Diaspora link with Israel should not be based on a myth, Beilin said with conviction. "It should be a reality. If it is a myth, then it is very fragile."

In the same vein, giving money should not be the only means of identification with Israel, he said. "I'm sure we can enrich each other by (real) dialogue. And a dialogue in which they write checks to me is not a dialogue, in my eyes."

#### A Critical Difference

Most of Beilin's arguments are not new. The prime minister has been calling for a redefinition of the Israel-Diaspora relationship that recognizes Israel's increased strength and that addresses Jewish continuity in the Diaspora through a stepped-up emphasis on Jewish education.

But there is a critical difference, said Gad Ben-Ari, Rabin's spokesman. While the prime minister believes "it's important and legitimate to debate" how much money should be allocated to Israel, and that fund-raising approaches should be discussed, Rabin also believes the only way to contribute to Jewish continuity is to strengthen ties to Israel within the existing structures.

Beilin's model, Ben-Ari said, reflects a misunderstanding of "the importance of the dynamic of fund raising, not only for Israel but for the entire structure of the Jewish community in the Diaspora."

Any attempt to stop the current fund raising for Israel "would create grave damage to the relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel" and "take the oxygen away" from fund raising for local Jewish needs, he said.

Israel is "the essence and center of Jewish life," said Ben-Ari. "It is a joint venture" in which Israel and the Diaspora are partners, and of which "fund raising is an important element."

"The prime minister wants a new agenda," the spokesman said, "not to dismantle what has been built."

## NEW ITALIAN BOOK BLAMES ISRAEL FOR 1980 DOWNING OF PASSENGER PLANE

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- A book recently released in Italy implicates Israel in the mysterious crash of an Italian domestic passenger plane in 1980 in which 81 people lost their lives.

Israeli officials have denounced the findings of "The Fifth Scenario," by journalists Claudio Gatti and Gail Hammer, as "ridiculous." And Italian journalists have pointed out that the new explanation for the crash -- an accidentally fired Israeli missile -- is full of holes.

The June 27, 1980, crash of an Itavia Airlines DC9 into the Mediterranean Sea on a flight from Bologna to Palermo, Sicily, has remained one of the great mysteries of Italy's postwar period.

Examination of wreckage recovered from the seabed, near the island of Ustica, northwest of Sicily, indicated that the plane was probably either destroyed by a bomb or -- more likely -- shot down by a missile.

Despite nearly 14 years of investigation, however, it has never been established who placed the bomb or who fired the missile, whichever it was, or why it occurred at all, although it is assumed that the missile would have been fired in error.

Various theories have pointed a finger at Libya, France, Italy or the United States, with the hypothesis that the Itavia plane was either hit by a missile that went astray during a training exercise, or that it got caught in some other type of cross fire.

There have been many accusations of cover-up.

According to the theory propounded in "The Fifth Scenario," Israel -- under direct orders of then Prime Minister Menachem Begin -- sent two Phantom jets, along with support planes, to intercept a French cargo plane that was transporting enriched uranium from France to Iraq for its nuclear reactor.

### Speculation On Begin's Depression

The fighter jets, the theory states, mistook the Itavia DC9 for the plane carrying the uranium and shot it down.

According to the book, the Israelis had learned that two shipments of uranium would be made: one on June 25 and the other June 27. The book says the June 25 shipment from Marseilles took place without incident.

The French plane that was supposed to leave on June 27 did not take off, according to "The Fifth Scenario." Therefore, the book claims, the Israelis fired at a plane in the anticipated air coordinates, only to down in error the Italian passenger jet, which took off two hours late.

The book claims it is this tragedy that prompted Begin's heart attack and collapse in the Knesset on June 30 and that led to the start of a mental collapse that forced him out of politics.

According to the book, opposition to Begin's plan to shoot down the French plane may have led to Defense Minister Ezer Weizman's resignation a month before the tragedy.

The book says Israeli Col. Ran Goren, head of the Israeli air force's operational department, was removed from his position as punishment and sent to the United States, ostensibly to take part in a study course.

Goren has denied the claim in an interview

with the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot and the spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Rome has categorically denied the accusations.

"It is a ridiculous story, the fruit of an imagination that is too fertile," the spokesman said.

"Israel has nothing to do with the tragic affair of Ustica. It is not the first time that someone has tried to unload on Israel the responsibility for some occurrence that has not been resolved. It is time to stop this deplorable behavior," he said.

Andrea Purgatori, writing in the Milan daily Corriere della Sera, said the book included much documentation but left unresolved questions.

"Is it possible that the Mossad would not have ascertained that the French cargo plane did not leave Marseilles?" he wrote.

"Is it possible that the Israeli pilots, so efficient and well-trained, would have mistaken a DC9 for an Airbus A-300, with its lines and dimensions so different?"

"Is it possible that no suspicion of responsibility by Jerusalem ever emerged in all these 14 years of investigation? And is it possible that the counterespionage services of France, Italy and the United States remained in the dark about what happened?" Purgatori asked.

## ITALIAN HIGH SCHOOLS TO GET VIDEOS ABOUT JEWISH CULTURE

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- Italy's education minister has unveiled a video about Jewish religion, history and culture that will be distributed to high schools all over the country.

"This initiative is of great importance," Education Minister Rosa Russo Jervolino told reporters at a news conference last week at which excerpts from the video were shown.

She said 10,000 videocassettes would be distributed to Italian schools.

Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, who also took part in the news conference, said the Italian Jewish community considered the release of the video a significant development.

"We hope that it will be a pilot program leading to other educational initiatives," she said.

"Prejudice is born of ignorance. In a democratic society, unity and diversity are both important. This film presents a small part of the Italian reality.

"Today, prejudice is being expressed against new immigrants. This video shows the 2,000-year continuity of Jews in Italy. It demonstrates a long coexistence that can be an example for new immigrants," said Zevi.

The 70-minute video, titled "Who Are the Jews?" was produced by the Education Ministry in cooperation with the state television network, RAI, and the Jewish community.

Jewish leaders had lobbied for years to use educational material about the country's Jews in Italy's school system.

A panel of experts wrote the script and also assembled background literature that will also be used in the classroom.

Along with the video, complementary texts and teacher manuals will be distributed throughout the country.

About 40,000 Jews live in Italy out of a total population of 58 million. More than half the Jewish population lives in Rome and Milan.

**REMARK BY YELTSIN AIDE SPARKS  
OUTCRY FROM PARTY, JEWISH GROUPS**

NEW YORK, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- An anti-Semitic remark made by a senior aide to Russian President Boris Yeltsin has prompted criticism by members of Russia's largest political party and by American Jewish organizations.

The comment was made on Russian television two weeks ago by Mikhail Poltoranin, the leader of a parliamentary committee on information and communications.

Condemning Russian media criticism of government policies, Poltoranin said his country's journalists had developed a new language, "prison camp Hebrew," which he described as "an explosive mix of Russophobia, hate for traditions, lies and contempt for traditions."

"If this continues," Poltoranin said, "we will simply blow up the country and trigger a colossal wave of anti-Semitism in return."

Russian anti-Semitic groups had coined the word "Russophobia" during the 1960s as a catch-all term to describe alleged Jewish plots to take over the country.

Poltoranin subsequently was criticized by members of his own party, Russia's Choice, which won the largest bloc of seats in the lower house of Parliament in last December's elections.

The surprisingly strong showing of nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's so-called Liberal Democratic Party in the elections made Poltoranin's remarks particularly sensitive.

The members of Poltoranin's party did not officially rebuke him, but instead called on party members to "choose their words especially carefully when talking about the national problem," according to Russia's Interfax news agency.

Poltoranin later apologized for the remark.

According to Jewish organizations in Russia, anti-Semitism has steadily increased as the country's living conditions have declined.

**The Atmosphere Is Becoming Polluted**

The Washington-based Union of Councils, long an advocate for Soviet Jews, has condemned Poltoranin's comments, which the organization's national director, Micah Naftalin, described in a statement as "an index of just how polluted with anti-Semitism the general political atmosphere and rhetoric in Russia is becoming."

"It was an attempt by the Yeltsin forces to intimidate critics in the press, as they have also done against human rights critics in recent months," said the statement, which added that Poltoranin had made "rhetorical common cause with the nationalists by borrowing their anti-Semitic code words, such as Russophobia."

"This is especially chilling and intimidating coming from the chairman of the parliamentary committee that oversees the media," Naftalin's statement read.

The incident, according to the statement, "highlights the need for President Yeltsin to exert positive leadership by speaking out vigorously against dangerously rising anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of ethnic and national enmities and hate crimes."

Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said the quote was very distressing and does not appear to be an isolated incident.

He said the National Conference's Moscow representative believes such remarks reflect a reaction to Zhirinovskiy's success.

**FRENCH JEWS SUE L'OREAL COSMETICS  
FOR BOYCOTT COMPLIANCE AND BRIBERY**  
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- A \$100 million civil action suit has been filed by two French brothers against L'Oreal, alleging that the world's largest cosmetics manufacturer bribed Syrian authorities to get off the blacklist of companies that comply with the Arab boycott of Israel.

The suit, filed Feb. 2 in New York State Supreme Court by Jean and David Frydman, also charges fraud, saying the firm forged papers to remove Jean Frydman from L'Oreal's board because he was a resident of Israel.

The suit was filed in New York because, the brothers say, New York State and U.S. anti-boycott law were violated by L'Oreal's American licensee, Cosmair.

The Frydmans also recently filed a complaint against L'Oreal with the U.S. Office of Boycott Compliance in Washington. The New York suit is the latest leg in a convoluted saga that travels from Paris to Israel and the United States.

Cosmair issued a statement last week saying that the complaint "clearly misstates" the U.S. firm's activities.

The firm said, "Cosmair, Inc. is a U.S. company operating exclusively on the American market" and "has no business interest in the Middle East."

Moreover, it said, "Cosmair has a longstanding policy forbidding discrimination on any grounds including race, creed and nationality."

And it denied ties to a deceased chief executive of L'Oreal who served prison time for war crimes.

**Hope American Court Will Provide Justice**

Will Maslow, who is editor of the Boycott Report published by the American Jewish Congress and who has been an adviser to the Frydman family, said, "We're delighted that the suit has been brought and we hope that the American courts will provide the Frydman brothers with the justice that the French courts were unable to give them."

Jean Frydman, who lives in Israel and also retains French citizenship, was a board member in France of L'Oreal and was also a longtime friend of L'Oreal Chairman Francois Dalle.

In 1990, the two entered into a separate business agreement to set up a film company called Paravision. Some of the funds for establishing the company were to be provided by L'Oreal.

It has been inferred, but never proven, that the Damascus-based Arab League Boycott office was incensed by this arrangement with an Israeli, Frydman, and placed L'Oreal on the blacklist.

But a French lawyer who has perused documents regarding L'Oreal claimed that money changed hands to remove the company from the blacklist and gave written substantiation of a list of charges the Frydmans have made against the company.

Parts of a secret report prepared by the lawyer, David Ruzie, were leaked last month to the French and Israeli media. The Frydman brothers and Ruzie charge that L'Oreal made bribery payments to remove the firm from the blacklist and in 1988 closed an Israeli plant of the company Helena Rubinstein, which L'Oreal had acquired. The case in France went into arbitration but remained inconclusive.

Israel is pressing L'Oreal for a public apology.