



NEWS AT A GLANCE

■ **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** told members of his Cabinet that he made clear to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that his government opposes dismantling Jewish settlements. He earlier told an international conference of Jewish journalists that settlement expansion does not violate the Oslo accords and that it involves less than one percent of West Bank land. [Page 2]

■ **Some 20,000 Holocaust survivors in Hungary** will soon receive payments from Switzerland's Holocaust Memorial Fund. The first checks from the \$190 million fund were distributed last month in Latvia.

■ **A German court sentenced a former Nazi guard to 20 months probation** for his role in a 1942 massacre. Ernst Hering, 75, was convicted of standing guard while 19 Jewish children were shot in the Ukrainian village of Israelowka.

■ **El Al decided to purchase five new planes** from the American firm Boeing for \$170-\$180 million over a rival bid by the European consortium Airbus. The United States had strongly urged Israel's national airline to give the deal to Boeing.

■ **Authorities in the Russian city of Orel** are refusing to give the city's only synagogue back to the Jewish community. The city said the community can only have the building if it helps finance the construction of a new college that is now housed in the synagogue. [Page 3]

■ **A German bank appointed four historians** to investigate whether it profited from Nazi-looted gold. Deutsche Bank has come under pressure to pay into a fund for Holocaust victims.

■ **Israeli Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein** returned to Moscow to discuss arrangements for the pilgrimage of some 2 million followers of the Russian Orthodox Church between 1999 and 2001. [Page 2]

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

The big Capitol Hill debate: Sour cream or applesauce?

By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The debate on Capitol Hill carried enormous consequences for the Washington Jewish community.

Sour cream or applesauce? On latkes, of course.

That's what much of Jewish Washington has been reduced to in the doldrums of the holiday season.

With Congress halfway through a three-month recess and President Clinton splitting time between White House holiday parties and his new dog, Jewish Washington has also relaxed — a bit.

Then came the recent annual "Vodkas and Latkes" party at Rabinowitz Media Strategies on Capitol Hill.

With most guests in a dress-down mode and many of the men sporting a couple of days' stubble, the immaculately groomed Stephen Silberfarb instigated the age-old latke debate.

For Silberfarb, the deputy director of the National Jewish Democratic Council and a Washington-area native, applesauce on latkes is like Republicans on Jews. His preference for sour cream prompted strong objections from many in the crowd who were strategically placed at the kitchen door.

An informal survey showed applesauce an 8-1 favorite over sour cream in the largely Democratic, Northeast crowd.

When the gentleman from New York, Matthew Traub, rose to proclaim "Definitely applesauce," he did so as if on the House floor, where from time to time he accompanies his boss, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.).

But the most stinging criticism came from Silberfarb's own assistant, Adena Kanofsky, a Long Island, N.Y., native.

"It's rather embarrassing," she said of Silberfarb's condiment choice.

Apparently other guests agreed; the bowl of sour cream grew warm as the party progressed. Unfortunately, the party's host, Steve Rabinowitz, whose clients include the Reform movement and the New Israel Fund, never had the opportunity to share in the debate. Rabinowitz was chained to the stove with the Chanukah curse — latke frying.

While not all is fun and games, even the work in Washington takes on a lighter edge during the slow, recess months.

Many Jewish officials use the time to plan for the return of Congress, scheduled to take place Jan. 28.

Ditching high heels for Rollerblades

Stacy Burdett, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office, has her task down to a science.

Last December, Burdett ditched her high heels for Rollerblades and fulfilled the dream of many Hill rats, as congressional staffers and lobbyists are affectionately known, as she sailed through the corridors of the Rayburn House Office Building.

"It was the first time that the marble floors were used for something other than having your high-heeled shoes make a lot of noise," Burdett said.

This year, Burdett has stayed off the Hill and concentrated on some work that she wouldn't otherwise have time for. For instance, she was in the final stages of drafting a letter to the German minister of defense to congratulate him on a recent reprimand of officers who invited a neo-Nazi to speak to his troops.

With Chanukah just around the corner, most Jewish groups are planning their own festivities. The American Friends of Lubavitch was planning to mix business and pleasure at its annual Capitol Hill Chanukah party. Rabbi Levi Shemtov, director of the Lubavitch Washington office, was expected to inaugurate the Capitol Jewish Forum, an informal group of Jewish Hill staffers that now boasts more than 100 members.

Others use the time to escape the Washington Beltway.

Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, took a couple of days to head West to plan the Republican group's annual winter leadership trip to Aspen, Colo.

While Brooks was busy deciding against snapping a tabloid photo of supermodel Cindy Crawford dining with an unidentified man, his staff was

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working on a statement urging Clinton to avoid pressuring Israel.

Back in the nation's capital, the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations was concentrating its efforts on one of the only substantive policy debates that engages Washington in December — the writing of the federal budget.

CJF is working to convince the Clinton administration to restore food stamps for legal immigrants and refugees, a benefit that was cut under last year's balanced-budget agreement. With the federal budget scheduled to go to the printer the first week of January, CJF's lobbyists have had little down time this season.

With hunger on the rise among Jewish elderly immigrants who lost federal benefits, for them the debate is not over applesauce or sour cream.

"We have a crisis on our hands," said Diana Aviv, director of the CJF Washington office. "In our community, we're going to have death or starvation or serious crises in our emergency rooms." □

Israel, Palestinians rely on CIA to negotiate prisoner releases

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The CIA is playing a key role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

According to a recent security agreement, the Palestinian Authority will inform the CIA when it wants to release prisoners. American officials will then relay the list to Israel, which will have the right to protest the releases.

The arrangement will give Israel indirect supervision of the Palestinian's release policy, but the ultimate decision regarding the releases will be in the hands of CIA officials, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot.

CIA representatives have been regular participants since August in Israeli-Palestinian security meetings.

Last week's agreement was intended to deal with long-standing Israeli complaints regarding the "revolving door" policy in Palestinian jails that allows for the routine release of terrorists shortly after their arrest.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized this policy during remarks here last Friday to journalists attending the International Conference of the Jewish Media.

"For four years, they have been promising to combat terrorism," he said of the Palestinian Authority.

Meanwhile, he added, "the murderers of little children and mothers are wandering around free."

Israeli officials have repeatedly called for a Palestinian crackdown on terrorism as a precondition to any further redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank.

The Dec. 17 agreement was reached on the eve of last week's meetings between U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Netanyahu in Paris and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat in London.

The agreement also calls on the Palestinian Authority to prevent incitement against Israel, dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in areas under its control and collect illegal weapons, according to the Israeli daily Ma'ariv. □

Israel readies for pilgrimage of 2 million Russian Orthodox

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Israel is preparing to become a mecca for millions of Russian Christians.

Some 2 million followers of the Russian Orthodox Church are expected to make a pilgrimage to the Jewish state between 1999 and 2001 to mark the 2000th anniversary

of Christianity. The pilgrimage will create thousands of additional jobs, mainly for recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, said Yuli Edelstein, Israel's minister of absorption.

Edelstein, who spent several years in a Soviet labor camp before immigrating to Israel in 1987, came here last week on his first visit as an Israeli government minister.

The former Prisoner of Zion met with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Luzhkov and Edelstein created a joint commission that is expected to work out the details of the pilgrimage project.

The wave of Russian religious tourists is expected to spend in Israel between \$2 billion and \$3 billion, according to a Moscow daily newspaper.

Edelstein, a native of Moscow, was a dissident and Hebrew teacher during the Soviet era. In 1984, the KGB sent him to the gulag for alleged "illegal possession of drugs." He was released in 1987.

Edelstein said anti-Semitism no longer plays a large role in aliyah from the former Soviet Union and added that Israel has to work harder to attract more Russian immigrants. □

Netanyahu vows to maintain all settlements in territories

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel does not intend to give up any settlements as part of an agreement with the Palestinians, pledged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu said Sunday that in his meeting last week with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, he made clear his government's opposition to dismantling settlements.

Netanyahu was quoted as telling the Cabinet that the discussions with Albright in Paris on Dec. 18 focused on increasing American understanding of Israel's concerns, among them Palestinian fulfillment of their obligations under the signed agreements with the Jewish state.

The prime minister's remarks came on the heels of a declaration Friday at a conference here that Israel has a right to a presence in the West Bank.

"We should be there. This is our land, our homeland. We have differences of opinion over the territory," Netanyahu told journalists from around the world attending the International Conference on the Jewish Media.

"There is nothing in the Oslo accords that prohibits Israel from building settlements," said Netanyahu, adding that the land used to expand existing settlements is less than 1 percent of the West Bank.

Netanyahu's remarks at the Jerusalem conference sparked a sharp Palestinian reaction, with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and other senior officials declaring that his statements were a gross violation of the Oslo accords. Arafat, who met with Albright in London last week, told reporters over the weekend that the Palestinians are determined to realize their objective of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with Jerusalem as its capital.

Albright said over the weekend that her meeting with Netanyahu made some "serious progress" and that she expected the Israelis to come forward with a "serious" proposal for a redeployment in the West Bank.

Israel is not expected to make any decision on the scope of a redeployment until mid-January in order to avoid the possibility that hard-line coalition members would use a pending vote on the state budget to pressure Netanyahu in the political arena. □

2 Jewish men behind creation of acclaimed Getty art complex

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The Getty Center officially opened last week, and not since the 1984 Olympic Games has Los Angeles reveled in so much positive press.

The 800 journalists taking nine-hour tours duly noted the vital statistics of the massive artistic complex: The \$1 billion price tag for the museum and five satellite institutes, the 54 sky-lit galleries, the 295,000 blocks of stone shipped from Italy for the construction — and the anticipated 1.3 million annual visitors.

For Los Angeles' Jewish community, there was quiet satisfaction in the accomplishments of the two men most responsible for the center's creation: Harold Williams and Richard Meier.

Williams became president of the J. Paul Getty Trust in 1981, topping a distinguished business and academic career.

During the 13 years of the center's evolution, from 1984 to 1997, he was involved in every phase of its creation and was the ultimate arbiter of its design and scope.

Williams said in an interview that he was born in Los Angeles into a Russian-Jewish immigrant family.

He mentioned with some pride his late uncle, Noah Naftulski.

A park in Tel Aviv bears the name of Naftulski, who was one of the founders of the second-oldest kibbutz, Kvutzah Kinneret, and helped to introduce banana cultivation to the Jordan Valley.

During his tenure as dean of the University of California at Los Angeles' school of management, Williams led an academic mission to Hebrew University, and since heading the Getty Center, he has established professional ties with the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv.

Williams will retire next month. He has made no retirement commitments, except to join the board of trustees at the Getty's Jewish neighbor, the Skirball Cultural Center, which opened 18 months ago.

Meier, the architect of the Getty Center, is a Reform Jew.

Planning Jerusalem's architectural future

His grandparents emigrated from Germany in the 1890s and settled in New Jersey.

Among Meier's family legacies were two "beautiful" menorahs, one of which now stands in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the other in the Skirball museum.

After Meier graduated from Cornell University's architecture school, he decided to work abroad.

The first country Meier visited was Israel, where he met with several architects and admired the then-pristine Eilat coastline.

As he made his professional reputation, he was invited in the 1970s by Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek to help plan the city's architectural future. "I'm not sure that Kollek followed any of my advice," said Meier.

Williams will leave his office Jan. 5, and the following day Barry Munitz will move in as the new head of the Getty Center and the J. Paul Getty Trust.

Munitz, raised in a Conservative Jewish home in Brooklyn, was educated at Brooklyn College and Princeton University. He then embarked on a successful career in the public, corporate, cultural and academic worlds, which culminated in the chancellorship of the 23-campus California State University system.

Munitz was an active board member of the local

Anti-Defamation League chapter while living in Houston, and is a frequent participant of ADL activities in Los Angeles.

Despite their differences in scale and endowment, the Getty and the Skirball, which is affiliated with the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College, work together as the southern and northern anchors of the same hilltop formation in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The connection was recognized by the Getty Trust more than a decade ago with a \$1 million grant to the Skirball during the latter's early fund-raising efforts. □

Russian city wants local Jews to pay for synagogue's return

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — Authorities in Orel are holding the Russian city's only synagogue for ransom.

In a letter to Orel's small Jewish community, Vitaly Kochuev, the deputy governor of the Orel region, said the synagogue building is federal property.

The building, which now houses a technical college, was erected in 1912 and confiscated by the Bolsheviks in 1922.

While authorities have agreed to return the building, they have been demanding that the 3,000-member Jewish community help pay for the construction of a new building for the college, a suggestion reiterated by Kochuev in a letter sent to the Jewish community last week.

He was responding to a letter sent last month to Orel Governor Egor Stroev by the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations, an umbrella group for Orthodox and Reform synagogues in Russia, urging the synagogue's return.

Jewish community leaders have said they would be unable to raise even one-tenth of the estimated \$1.8 million needed for the construction project.

Semyon Livshitz, leader of the Orel Jewish community, recently said in an interview that the synagogue should be returned to the Jews, noting that all other faiths "were given back the property formerly belonging to them with no compensation for the city." □

Hollywood Jewish cemetery saved

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — The last resting place for some of Hollywood's famous Jews has been rescued from oblivion.

The cemetery holds the graves of actors Paul Muni and Peter Lorre; Mel Blanc, the voice of many popular cartoon characters; producers Harry Cohn and Jesse Lasky; composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold; and mobster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel.

Beth Olam is the Jewish section of Hollywood Memorial Park Cemetery, which has been in bankruptcy for 18 months and earlier this month was close to being padlocked and abandoned.

Bankruptcy trustees had been fruitlessly seeking a buyer for more than a year and were ready to close down the cemetery when the Callanan Mortuary offered \$375,000 for the memorial park and promised to refurbish the badly neglected grounds.

Actors Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Tyrone Power, and directors John Huston and Cecil B. DeMille, are buried in the general section of the cemetery.

The bailout came as a great relief to the city's Jews, who feared that they might be prevented from visiting and tending some 20,000 graves.

Others faced the loss of pre-paid burial plots, crypts and mausoleum vaults. □

German survivor's papers sold at auction, donated to museum

By Leon E. Brown
Jewish Exponent

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) — A former Reagan Cabinet member helped create a satisfying ending to a Holocaust survivor's story.

Early on the morning of Dec. 3, Drew Lewis, former transportation secretary for President Reagan, was flying from Philadelphia to Fort Worth, Texas, when he read a story in the New York Times about Edith Hahn.

The story explained that Hahn, an 83-year-old Jew who now lives in Netanya, Israel, was putting her personal letters and photographs from World War II up for auction at Sotheby's of London because she needed money.

According to the Times, Hahn had wanted to donate the material to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, but reluctantly decided to put her personal archives up for sale because she needed money for two cataract operations.

Lewis, who is not Jewish, thought of his friend Dalck Feith, who also escaped from the Nazis. Feith, a member of the executive committee and board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, was born in Austria and lost his whole family, except for one sister, in the Holocaust.

Lewis immediately called Feith and asked if he would split the bidding price at the auction.

Feith agreed.

"I didn't care if it cost me a million dollars," Feith said. "I already gave a million dollars to the [U.S.] Holocaust [Memorial] Museum, so I could give another million."

A member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council for 10 years, Feith is a founder of the museum and was instrumental in bringing to Philadelphia the first Holocaust monument on public property decades ago. Lewis also contributed to the museum.

The auction house estimated that the sale of Hahn's collection would bring a top figure of \$34,000. But Lewis found himself in the midst of an intense bidding war.

There was a lot of interest from literary agents and film producers; it was even rumored that Steven Spielberg was among the bidders.

Lewis and Feith reportedly won out with a bid of \$169,250 — almost five times the top estimate at Sotheby's.

Papers to be donated to Holocaust museum

The two immediately announced that they were donating the Hahn collection to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Hahn's collection of more than 250 letters and personal papers, including rare photographs, details her life and survival.

According to recent press reports, Hahn was born in Vienna, where her parents, assimilated Jews, ran a restaurant. Her father died in 1936.

Hahn was training as a lawyer when Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938. She and her mother were forced into the Jewish ghetto in Vienna.

She exchanged letters with the man she considered her closest friend, later her fiance, fellow student Joseph Rosenfeld, whom she called "Pepi."

During her five months there, she smuggled in a camera and took pictures of forced laborers in the field, recent stories have reported.

By October 1941, she was working in a paper factory near Leipzig, Germany, getting little to eat. Her mother was deported and died in a concentration camp in 1942.

Ordered to report for resettlement, which meant deportation to Auschwitz, Hahn went underground in Vienna. A non-Jewish friend supplied her with identity papers, which Hahn used to escape to Munich, Germany, where she worked as a seamstress and a maternity nurse.

In August 1942, she met and eventually married Werner Vetter, a member of the Nazi Party.

In 1944, as the war turned against the Germans and Allied bombing attacks intensified, Hahn fled with her infant daughter, one of the few Jewish children born in Germany in 1944, to the countryside. Vetter was drafted into the German army, captured by the Russians and sent to Siberia.

After the war, Hahn became a judge in the Soviet zone of Germany, but fled to Britain when the Russians tried to make her spy on her colleagues. She and Vetter later divorced, media reports said.

In 1957, living in London, she married another refugee from Vienna, Fred Beer. Before Beer died in 1984, they visited Pepi and retrieved her letters. □

Italian party with fascist roots backs Jewish restitution claims

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — The leader of an Italian political party with fascist roots has called on the European Union to press for the restitution of Jewish property and assets seized during World War II.

The move is part of party leader Gianfranco Fini's efforts to distance his National Alliance Party from its past.

In a message last week asking E.U. officials to support restitution efforts, Fini said, "Half a century after the immense tragedy of the Holocaust, the problem of the restitution of goods seized from the victims and conserved in credit institutes and banks in various countries has not yet been resolved.

"Nor has what happened to the gold stolen by the Nazis been clarified," he added.

During the war, the Nazis melted down gold looted from Holocaust victims. The Nazis then sold it along with the ingots stolen from the central banks of the European countries they overran.

E.U. officials, Fini said, should "bring to bear all pressure possible on the governments involved in order to bring this manifest injustice to an end."

The National Alliance was formed from the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement party, and Fini has sought to turn it into a mainstream party.

Earlier this month, he condemned the anti-Semitic laws introduced in 1938 by the fascist government of Benito Mussolini. He also condemned the so-called Salò Republic, a diehard fascist-run enclave set up by Mussolini in Nazi-occupied northern Italy after the Allied invasion of Italy in 1943.

In another effort to burnish his party's image, Fini attended a book party last week of the diaries of Giorgio Perlasca, an Italian businessman who was a member of the Fascist Party, but who nonetheless saved thousands of Jews in the Budapest Ghetto during the war.

Perlasca, known in Italy as the "Italian Schindler," passed himself off as a diplomat from neutral Spain and supplied false passports to Jews.

Perlasca's story did not come out until the early 1990s. He died a few years ago.

Perlasca's wartime diaries were recently published in book form after being serialized in the Rome Jewish monthly *Shalom*.

Fini sat in the front row at the book party, which was also attended by a representative from the Israeli Embassy and officials of the Jewish community. □