



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 76, No. 182

Friday, October 9, 1998

81st Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinton to get involved

President Clinton said he is "prepared to invest as much time as it takes" to get Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to break the 19-month deadlock in their negotiations. The president is expected to meet next week with the two in eastern Maryland. Clinton said he asked the two to clear their schedules for a "couple of days" to work on reaching an agreement and paving the way for the long-delayed final-status negotiations.

Nazi files declassified

President Clinton signed legislation authorizing the release of thousands of classified U.S. files on Nazi war criminals. The Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, which Congress approved unanimously, creates a new multiagency working group to locate, identify, inventory and recommend for release by the National Archives all classified information held by the government on Nazi war criminals.

Bill backs Iraqi rebels

The U.S. Senate passed a bill providing up to \$97 million in military aid for Iraqi rebels seeking to oust Saddam Hussein. The bill passed the House of Representatives earlier this week and now awaits President Clinton's signature.

Coalition seeks \$2.7 million

The Christian Coalition is seeking contributions for a \$2.7 million campaign aimed at getting U.S. religious conservatives to the polls on Nov. 3.

According to the group's budget, more than \$1 million would be spent on printing and distributing some 45 million voter guides and congressional scorecards, and an additional \$1 million would go for a get-out-the-vote drive. The effort comes amid continued scrutiny of the conservative Christian lobby's past political activities that stems from a lawsuit filed by the Federal Election Commission.

REMINDER: Because of the She-mini Atzeret and Simchat Torah holidays, the JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 12, 13 and 14.

Federations in the driver's seat as 'road to merger' nears its end

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — As 1998 winds to a close, the leaders of the United Jewish Appeal and local Jewish federations are gearing up to complete the overhaul of American Jewry's central fund-raising establishment.

This month, an outside facilitator, Jeffrey Solomon, began meeting with top professionals at UJA and the Council of Jewish Federations to keep their merger from idling on the way to a self-imposed year-end deadline.

When it emerges after nearly a decade of conceptual planning, the new entity — born of the union of UJA, CJF and the United Israel Appeal — will have a single chief professional officer and a unified organizational structure.

It will also have a new system of governance that puts federations squarely in the driver's seat of North America's primary Jewish charity, which raises over \$1 billion a year for Jewish needs, both nationally and overseas.

"I think it's appropriate that the federations control the system," Dr. Conrad Giles of Detroit, CJF's president, said in a telephone interview. "It is their system. They are paying for it, and whatever sense of loss of control they have had in the past is regrettable."

That sense, he explained, grew out of a perception that the national organizations, although supported by local federations, were not responding to the communities' needs.

As a result, an increasing number of federations began to demand a louder voice and a greater share in deciding how funds would be allocated here and in Europe and Israel.

Last month in Washington, a three-day quarterly meeting of the UJA-CJF-UJA partnership, which currently is being called the UJA Federations of North America, yielded a basic outline for operations.

The plan gives federations a majority voice in the new partnership's governing bodies.

"I'm convinced that with the ownership of the new organization," Giles said, federations "will also accept the responsibility of making certain that the system does its best for all of its members."

Still to be resolved are several potential sticking points.

For example, the structure and function of committees will reflect widely debated issues, such as the need for a Jewish renaissance committee to address concerns about education and continuity or a committee to oversee and secure funding for national social service agencies.

Moreover, a recommendation endorsed by the committee drafting the plans for the new entity centers around one of the merger's most divisive issues: collective responsibility — the degree to which federations should be obligated to contribute at set levels to nationally determined fund-raising priorities.

The drafting committee's report proposes that communities voluntarily commit to maintain current levels of overseas allocations for the next two years to provide security for agencies administering funds abroad, namely the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Significantly, the drafting committee's report represents "an effort rising up by those who will own the organization" rather than a "top-down effort," UJA President Richard Wexler of Chicago said in a telephone interview. Ideas about governance,

MIDEAST FOCUS

Hebron clashes continue

One Palestinian was killed and seven others wounded when Israeli troops dashed with stone-throwers in Hebron. The clashes took place as Arab residents there observed a general strike to protest a weeklong curfew on the tense West Bank town. Israel imposed the curfew after a Palestinian threw a grenade at Israeli troops.

Meanwhile, Israel kept the West Bank and Gaza Strip sealed off. The closure, imposed in the wake of Hamas terror threats, has been in effect almost continuously since the start of Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 20.

Arafat invites Russians

Yasser Arafat invited Russian officials to participate in next week's Middle East peace summit in Washington, according to Russian news agencies.

The Palestinian leader issued the invitation after arriving in Moscow for two days of meetings that include discussions with President Boris Yeltsin, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and other Russian officials.

Ross mediates airport talks

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross discussed the long-delayed opening of an airport in the Gaza Strip with Israeli and Palestinian officials. Ross, who remained in the region after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright left, said security concerns continue to block agreement on the airport's opening.

Sheinbein lawyers appeal

Attorneys for Samuel Sheinbein appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court to block a ruling that would allow the extradition of the teen-age murder suspect to stand trial in Maryland.

An Israeli court ruled last month that Sheinbein, who had never before claimed Israeli citizenship or lived in Israel, does not have close enough ties to the Jewish state to seek shelter under Israel's law preventing the extradition of its citizens.



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
 Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
 Lisa Hosten, *Editor (on leave)*
 Kenneth Bandler, *Managing Editor*
 Lenore A. Silverstein, *Business Manager*

JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For 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.

funding and the distribution of funds collected by the new entity, he said, "rose directly from the federations themselves" at the meetings in Washington.

Those talks really helped energize the partnership, Wexler said.

"That's our biggest challenge," he said. "How do we assure that the new organization has the kind of engagement by the leadership of the fund-raising world, overseas advocacy, mega-donors and federation leaders in a new organization with vision and dynamism?"

"That's been our failing to date."

The committee of over 40 lay leaders and professionals charged with fashioning the partnership's new structure reached broad consensus related to three key concerns: ownership/governance, collective responsibility and sources of funding (a combination of dues and allocations).

Under the new system, the centralized entity would be governed by:

- a delegate assembly of hundreds of representatives from federations and national beneficiary agencies, such as the Jewish Community Centers of North America and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture;
- a board of trustees with between 100 and 120 members, the majority of whom would be nominated directly by and from federations; and
- a 20-person executive committee composed of officers, major standing committee chairs, representative federation presidents and the five chairs of the consolidated UJA-CJF regional offices (in Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Bergen County, N.J., and Deerfield Beach, Fla.).

The drafting committee distributed its report last month to federation and partnership leaders.

The committee will meet on Oct. 20 to discuss more precise details of structural and conceptual points.

And while fundamental issues — including an overall vision and mission statement — have yet to be determined, the drafting committee's report is seen as a major milestone along the "road to merger."

Until last month, that road had been a bumpy one, snarled in what Wexler described as "gridlock" between professional and lay leaders coming to the partnership from organizations with distinctly different policies, practices and procedures.

To keep the conversation flowing — and to clear the way for a new chief executive — the partnership has engaged Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, who until last year was the chief operating officer of the New York UJA-Federation.

"Bringing someone like Jeff in to help us frame the partnership and to facilitate meetings and thinking," Wexler said, "was vital to assuring we could meet the time frame we've committed ourselves to."

The mega-philanthropy is scheduled to begin operating under a new name and a new chief executive by the end of the year.

"We're hoping to at least help the new executive meet the ground running," said Solomon, hours before he headed to the partnership's headquarters in downtown Manhattan, where CJF, UJA and UIA set up shop together in June.

A search committee, headed by lay leaders Richard Pearlstone of Aspen, Colo., and Daniel Shapiro of New York, will meet for a third time later this month, but, despite rumors about prime contenders, no official candidates for the position have been named so far.

Meanwhile, Jay Yoskowitz, the former senior associate executive vice president at CJF, has taken over as CJF executive vice president, succeeding Martin Kraar.

Yoskowitz says he will stay on for "the duration," until a new chief executive gets behind the wheel of the centralized system.

And while he admitted no worries, his future role there and, by association, that of his UJA counterpart, Bernard Moscovitz, is, as yet, unclear.

"Whoever the chief is, whoever the new professional and lay people are, they will need to develop a system that is comfortable for them," Yoskowitz said in a spare moment between meetings.

"We're moving along, working as quickly as we can," he said, to come to conclusions "as we move closer and closer to the new entity." □

JEWISH WORLD

Brazilian commission hunts for artworks looted by Nazis

By Rochelle G. Sidel

SAO PAULO, Brazil (JTA) — The hunt for artworks looted by the Nazis is pressing ahead here.

A commission created by the Brazilian Justice Ministry in 1997 is using leads supplied by the World Jewish Congress to search for more than 100 such works sold in the country between the 1940s and 1970s.

In addition, two artworks — oil paintings by Claude Monet and Pablo Picasso — have been placed under the protection of the Special Commission to Examine the Nazi Legacy in Brazil.

According to Rabbi Henry Sobel, a member of the commission, the oils were in the possession of two São Paulo families.

The paintings were sold for \$2.2 million in 1939 and are worth considerably more today.

The sale was supposedly made through art dealer Thadeus Grauer, who represented the Switzerland-based Fischer Gallery in São Paulo. Many of the artworks looted by the Nazis from their Jewish owners found their way to Switzerland during and after the war.

The families who owned the two paintings did not know the works had been stolen and they have been cooperating with the commission, Sobel said.

He added that he has lists of suspect works that are housed in the Museum of Art of São Paulo, the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro and the Museum of Art of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre.

He named two paintings in the Porto Alegre museum, originally bought by families in the region in the 1950s.

They were later donated to the museum.

One is "The Small Black Lake" by Rose Bonheur, and the other is a small untitled landscape by Bruxton Knight.

The sale of looted artworks had the purpose of filling the coffers of Kamaradenwerk, an arm of the Odessa network, which was dedicated to helping Nazis hiding in Latin America after the war, Sobel said.

Odessa was deactivated in 1954, but Kamaradenwerk continued operating until 1968, according to the commission.

Controversy has surrounded the commission's search.

Brazilian art dealers have questioned the ability of the commission to document whether any of the artworks had, in fact, originally been stolen by the Nazis during the war.

Museum officials, meanwhile, are defending themselves from charges that they are housing looted art.

"The works in the Museum of Art of São Paulo have their origin extremely well documented, and the major part of the collection was attained before the war. Therefore, I don't think there is any problem," the president of the museum, Júlio Neves, told a local newspaper.

"At any rate, until now no one questioned anything, and I don't know anything."

The director of the Museum of Art of Rio Grand do Sul, Paulo Amaral, told the newspaper, "I have the utmost sympathy for the work of the commission, but it is very much in the air, without papers, without proof."

According to him, the works in the museum by Bonheur and Knight that Sobel mentioned are having their purchase documents evaluated.

But he does not believe there will be any conclusive evidence that can relate them to the Fischer Gallery.

The commission has come under criticism for the secrecy surrounding its searches, but Sobel said it protects both the investigations and the individuals and institutions involved.

"The truth is that we have indications, but we don't have proof, and it is necessary to take precautions so that this does not become sensationalist," he said. □

Fire damages Toronto JCC

A fire that police say was deliberately set on the second day of Sukkot caused some \$10,000 in damage to the Jewish Community Center in downtown Toronto.

Canadian authorities are investigating whether the fire was a hate crime and whether it was related to an act of arson that damaged an Orthodox Jewish day school in Ottawa on Oct. 1, just after the end of Yom Kippur.

The Canadian Jewish Congress has offered \$5,000 for information that might lead to the conviction of those responsible for the Toronto fire.

Syrian's comments protested

The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center protested assertions by Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas that "international Zionism" was responsible for the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the 1992 defeat of President Bush and the sex scandal currently besetting President Clinton.

Gen. Tlas, who made the comments recently on Syrian television, is the author of "The Matzah of Zion," in which he repeats the old-age canard that Jews use the blood of innocent children to make matzah.

After the interview was aired, the associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, fired off a letter of protest to Syria's ambassador to the United States, Walid Muallem.

"We protest the type of demagoguery which continues to poison Arab minds and makes more difficult a rapprochement between our faith communities," Cooper wrote.

Front leader may avoid trial

The leader of France's extreme-right National Front hinted that he might not appear for a German trial on charges he trivialized the Holocaust.

"I'm not normally very keen on obeying orders — and never when they come from abroad," Jean-Marie Le Pen said after German prosecutors announced plans to investigate him.

Le Pen faces possible trial for comments he made in Munich in December 1997.

At that time, he reiterated his view that the Holocaust was merely "a detail" in the history of World War II.

Ethiopian Jewish leader dies

The spiritual leader of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel died at 92.

Kes Menashe Zemro was "this generation's greatest leader," said Adisu Massala, a Knesset member who immigrated from Ethiopia.

"A person like him doesn't exist anymore," Massala said.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Israelis wrestle with trauma 25 years after Yom Kippur War

By Avi Machlis

JERUSALEM (JTA) — After 25 years, the battle scars of the Yom Kippur War have yet to heal in Israel, where the bloody days of October 1973 left an indelible mark on the nation's consciousness.

Each year, as Jews across the world prepare to fast and pray, Israel mourns the 2,687 casualties of that war.

They retell war stories of an overconfident nation, drunk with victory after the 1967 Six-Day War, that was brutally shocked and sobered by invading Arab armies that nearly succeeded in breaking through Israel's defenses. But this year, along with the war stories, Israel launched a fresh round of soul-searching to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the war.

Israeli newspapers reopened the books on the war with biting criticism of the military and political leaders of the time, sparking a public debate on whether the lessons of the 1973 trauma have indeed been learned.

Two Hebrew words are associated with the war: "mehdal," Hebrew for "oversight," referring to Israel's general failure to foresee and be prepared for the war; and "conceptziya," or conception, referring to the intelligence breakdown.

According to the Agranat Commission, appointed by the government after the war to probe Israeli officials' prewar mindset, the "conceptziya" was to blame for Israel's lack of preparedness.

Intelligence officials believed Egypt's air power was too weak to launch a full-scale attack, and that Syria would not attack without Egypt. This belief led the army to brush off hard evidence to the contrary in the days prior to the outbreak of fighting.

The Agranat Commission, laying the blame squarely on the military, called for the dismissal of David Elazar, then army chief of staff. However, it did not specifically hold the government's leaders responsible, namely, Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

Shortly after the commission's interim report was submitted in April 1974, Meir stepped down, leading to the fall of the government. But before this year's Yom Kippur fast, the Israeli daily Ma'ariv launched a campaign to cancel those findings of the Agranat Commission that absolved the Meir government.

The paper published a personal account of Uri Simhoni, an operations officer in 1973, as he recalled testifying before the commission. Simhoni claimed the commission was not interested in his version of events. Instead, the panel directed him to answer specific questions that would confirm the impressions they had already formed.

The commission's conclusions ignored policy failures and the "excessive overconfidence" of the government that led to Israel's unpreparedness, the Ma'ariv article said. "If we don't recognize these mistakes, we will repeat them again."

After Yom Kippur ended this year, Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan publicly backed Ma'ariv's campaign and pledged to raise the issue in the Cabinet.

Some bereaved parents who participated in memorial ceremonies this year also voiced support.

Along with Ma'ariv, the Israeli daily Yediot Achronot directed

considerable criticism at Meir. Yediot reported that Meir had considered suicide during the most difficult hours of the war.

Both papers reminded readers of a secret meeting involving Jordan's King Hussein and Meir less than two weeks before the war broke out, in which the monarch is believed to have explicitly warned Meir that war was imminent.

Ma'ariv also published "The Unforgiven," a damning account of Meir's leadership of the country before and during the war by veteran journalist Amnon Dankner.

In the introduction to the article, Meir is branded "the stubborn, aged woman from Milwaukee" who "blinded us from seeing the storm clouds warning of the Yom Kippur War."

In a separate article, the newspaper questioned whether Israeli intelligence has learned the lessons of the war.

Journalist Oded Granot argued that the army has made some important changes since 1973 by establishing additional intelligence units with the explicit goal of "balancing" analyses — providing every possible angle to ensure that Israel does not succumb to a false "conceptziya" again.

But in the years since the Agranat report, argued Granot, military intelligence has also been driven by a desire to cover itself in the event of a breakdown.

It therefore provides less decisive recommendations and prefers to package reports in vague terms.

For example, he wrote, in February 1998 intelligence predicted a "low probability" that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein would launch missiles at Israel as the Gulf crisis intensified.

But intelligence also warned of a high probability that Saddam would launch missiles if he felt desperate.

Under such conditions, explained Granot, more and more "raw" intelligence material is being funneled directly to the prime minister, who is expected to make the final assessments.

But the premier is often overwhelmed by the mass of paper. This is why the Agranat Commission — and the Ciechanover Commission on the failed Mossad assassination of a Hamas official in Jordan last October — recommended setting up a national security council to advise the prime minister.

This has not yet been done.

Whether or not the lessons have been learned, one thing is clear from the Yom Kippur debate: The war led to profound changes in Israeli society and government. The war ushered in the first-ever election, in 1977, of a Likud government.

The lost authority of the political center led to a culture of sharp criticism from the left and settlement building from the right, according to a Yediot article entitled the "collapse of Israeli-ism."

Author Nissim Calderon argued that the demise of Labor leaders who were widely credited with leading the country during its first difficult 25 years dealt a painful blow to Israel.

Israelis "lost the feeling that they control their actions," he said, explaining that the trauma was not just military.

"It was a blow to the very definition of being Israeli," wrote Calderon. The war made Israelis passive, or at least, incapable of solving problems because of a constant deadlock on every issue.

He added that this is illustrated in the inability to make peace with the Arab world or to heal domestic rifts.

"Until 1973, we saw ourselves as active people. After 1973, we found our hands tied. Or rather, our hands weren't tied, they did plenty, but our actions canceled each other out and nothing important has happened since." □