



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 29

Friday, February 12, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli judges under fire

Israel's Supreme Court ordered stepped-up security for its justices. The move came after several fervently Orthodox leaders lashed out at recent court rulings, calling the judges anti-religious. One of those leaders, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, called the justices "oppressors of Jews" during a televised interview. President Ezer Weizman visited Yosef in an attempt to head off a planned rally Sunday at which some 300,000 followers are expected to protest the court rulings. [Page 3]

HIAS to help local federations

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society is offering up to \$1 million from its endowment fund to help local Jewish federations across the United States meet the costs of resettling Jews from the former Soviet Union. Federations get federal funds to help pay resettlement costs based on the number of arrivals from the former Soviet Union, but a sharp reduction in those numbers has strained the budgets of many federations.

Entity close to naming leader

The search for the leaders of American Jewry's new central fund-raising establishment is nearing its end, and philanthropist Charles Bronfman is said to be the front-runner for the top volunteer post. Meanwhile, federations are being asked to consider possible names for the new entity. [Page 4]

U.S. Congress lauds Hussein

Both houses of the U.S. Congress passed a resolution praising the "enlightened leadership" of Jordan's late King Hussein. The resolution also voiced U.S. support for Hussein's successor, King Abdullah.

One of Abdullah's first acts will be to authorize the resumption of strategic cooperation with Israel, including the restoration of full-scale intelligence cooperation, according to well-placed sources in Amman quoted by the London-based newsletter Foreign Report. This is expected to lead to the reopening of an Israeli intelligence station in Amman.

REMINDER: The JTA DAILY NEWS BULLETIN will not be published Monday, Feb. 15.

FOCUS ON ISSUES

Bunks and bug juice: Boosting the camp trail to Jewish identity

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Annie Tucker keeps kosher. She tries to go to services regularly. And she wants to be a Jewish educator.

The University of Pennsylvania senior attributes much of her Jewish commitment to summers spent at Camp Ramah New England, one of seven overnight camps run by the Conservative movement.

"Camp was this place to try on new behaviors," such as keeping Shabbat and observing kashrut everyday, "to put into practice the things you learn at Hebrew school," she said.

At camp she met "educators you could connect to," such as the male rabbinical student with an earring and an appreciation for the music of the Grateful Dead, who encouraged her to "bring Judaism home with you."

Tucker is not alone in her experience.

An estimated 30,000 children — or 4 percent of the Jewish camp-age population — attend the roughly 100 overnight camps in North America run by Jewish religious or Zionist movements and communal organizations.

Three of those campers are the children of Robert and Elisa Spungen Bildner. (Their fourth and youngest child is a day camper.)

"Jewish camping has clearly enhanced their identity as Jews and has given them lots of joy," said Robert Bildner, who credits his children, aged 5 to 14, with fostering an atmosphere of Jewish practice and learning in their New Jersey home.

Inspired by the positive influence of camp on their children, the Bildners provided the \$2 million in seed money for the Foundation for Jewish Camping, which opened its doors in August.

In a new study of Jewish summer resident camping to be published jointly by the foundation and the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, demographer Gary Tobin calls the initiative "a vehicle to champion the Jewish camping experience."

Its mission is to provide networking and partnership-building services to Jewish camps and to advance Jewish camping across the continent.

Major donors have already rallied around Jewish day schools and Israel experiences as effective cornerstones of Jewish identity-building.

Last fall, two prominent philanthropists, Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman, joined forces and funding sources to create Birthright Israel, a \$300 million initiative that will offer 10 days in Israel to every Jewish teen-ager and young adult beginning next year.

And in 1997 Steinhardt and 11 Jewish philanthropists and foundations created the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education to strengthen Jewish day school education in North America by establishing more schools, promoting Jewish education and attracting philanthropic leaders devoted to its future.

"We've seen Birthright and the initiative for Jewish day schools, but camping has fallen off the radar screen," said Elisa Spungen Bildner, herself an alumna of Camp Ramah in Wisconsin and a Jewish Community Center camp in Chicago.

The camping foundation's director, Rabbi Ramie Arian, concurred.

"Camp, which does the same kind of work, which is at least as powerful and reaches at least as many kids, was getting very little comparable attention," he said, backing up his assertion with a handful of recent Jewish demographic studies — and 15 years of

MIDEAST FOCUS

Rabin's daughter joins centrists

The daughter of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin joined Israel's still-unnamed centrist party headed by former Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

Dalia Rabin-Philosof, a lawyer, will run in the party's sixth slot in the nation's May vote for the next Knesset.

Shin Bet changing methods?

Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency has softened some of its interrogation methods, according to a lawyer for a Palestinian detained by the agency.

The Supreme Court has been hearing an appeal against the Shin Bet's interrogation methods by human rights groups.

Shin Bet officials have argued that their methods are crucial for obtaining information about planned terrorist attacks.

Palestinian admits to murder

A Palestinian living in eastern Jerusalem turned himself in to Israeli police for the stabbing murder of an Arab woman. The suspect said he had intended to attack a Jewish woman.

Meanwhile, Palestinian police said three Hamas fugitives turned themselves in after a 10-day man-hunt.

The three are suspected of killing a Palestinian security officer during a Feb. 1 shootout. A Palestinian boy and girl were struck by cars and killed when police pursued the three after the shootout.

Israeli hacker charged

A 19-year-old Israeli computer hacker was charged with breaking into the Pentagon's computer system last year.

Ehud Tanenbaum, known as "The Analyzer," was also charged with hacking his way into the computers of the U.S. Army and Navy, the NASA space agency, the Knesset and the Hamas Web site.

experience working for the Reform movement's youth division.

Arian and the Bildners aim to raise the profile of Jewish camping so that it equals day schools and Israel experiences as a pillar of Jewish identity-building.

Now the foundation is on the trail of what Arian calls "philanthropists of vision" to contribute to its \$20 million goal.

The funds will be used to increase publicity about the value of Jewish camps, to upgrade camp facilities and build new ones, to develop new programs to compete with non-Jewish camps and camps without overt Jewish missions, and to devote greater resources to attracting qualified staff.

During its first five months in operation, the foundation has raised nearly \$200,000 — through "good old-fashioned networking," said Arian, adding that plans are under way to begin dispersing grants of up to \$15,000 based on proposals submitted by Jewish camps.

"We've just completed a survey of the camps to ask them what their needs are," explained Arian.

One of the most immediate needs: recruiting and retaining quality counselors.

"It gets harder each year to find good staff," said Seth Schwartz, the director of Camp Tel Yehudah in Barryville, N.Y., the national senior camp of Young Judea, the youth movement of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, which runs six camps nationwide.

These days, many potential counselors — mostly of college age — make use of summer breaks to pursue professional internships or work in better-paying jobs.

"We have to come up with a way to convince college-age kids why, working at a summer camp, you'll get more out of it in the long run," Schwartz said.

Tucker, who worked as a counselor at Ramah for five years, suggests raising staff salaries, which average \$1,200 for nine weeks of work, as "a basic way to get at it."

Moreover, she said, "in terms of creating a resume, it's difficult to keep going back to camp."

Responding to the need for developing greater professionalism among camp counselors, the foundation plans to create national recruitment incentives that include ways to raise salaries.

Those might include joint internship-counseling programs with the help of well-placed camp alumni or parent contacts — or establishing counselor fellowships that would provide higher salaries and nominal prestige.

As a national clearinghouse, the foundation could also research and share successful strategies for fine-tuning the image of camp counseling for the outside world.

"You learn more that's valuable in real life and in business being a counselor at camp than by being an intern in most offices," Arian said. "That's not generally perceived to be the case, and it's a hard sell to make."

Looking beyond the immediate staffing challenge, the foundation eventually plans to provide funds for building and updating facilities to accommodate the overflow from existing camps and to make room for even more campers.

"We're busting at the seams right now," said Rabbi Allen Smith, the director of the Reform movement's youth division, which runs 11 national summer camps, serving about 10,000 kids a year.

Similarly, other Jewish camping groups have waiting lists for bunk space.

Arian and the Bildners, hoping to triple the number of campers, foresee the need to build 100 new camps around the country at a "bare-bones" minimum of \$3 million each.

In addition, camp offerings must be revamped in order to compete with university programs, trips to Israel, family vacations and specialty camps.

"The nut that we have to crack," said Spungen Bildner, "is a very big nut." □

Report: Slovakian texts ignore Holocaust

NEW YORK (JTA) — Jewish themes outside of the Holocaust are given little attention in textbooks in Slovakia, according to a new study published by the American Jewish Committee.

The Holocaust itself is mainly presented as it relates to the controversy surrounding the fascist Slovak state that existed during World War II. □



Daily News Bulletin

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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.

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JEWISH WORLD

Dutch 'hostile' to El Al

El Al airlines is considering cutting back operations in Holland because of what it terms a "hostile" and "anti-Semitic" environment spawned by a Dutch parliamentary inquiry into the 1992 crash of an El Al cargo jet in Amsterdam that killed 43 people.

Briefing a Knesset committee, El Al's director general said the airline is coming under a media assault in Holland, and that its offices are receiving hostile phone calls.

Lithuanian war trials suspended

A Lithuanian judge suspended the trials of two alleged war criminals after a panel of doctors decided that they are too ill to appear in court.

The judge said he plans to ask the U.S. Justice Department to back up its recent charge that Aleksandras Lileikis is feigning sickness.

Lileikis and the second defendant, Kazys Gimzauskas, are accused of turning Jews over to Nazi death squads.

Poles won't block Shoah march

A group of Poles seeking compensation for property seized by the Nazis abandoned plans to block an annual Jewish procession to memorialize Jews who died in Nazi concentration camps.

Saying they are "not protesting against the Jews," a spokeswoman for the group said they would hold a separate march instead of blocking the March of the Living.

Austria to return Rothschild art

Austria agreed to return some 250 artworks looted by the Nazis to the Austrian branch of the Rothschild family. The return of the Rothschild collection marks a first step in returning thousands of looted works to their rightful owners, said Austria's minister for cultural affairs. Austria set up a commission last year to trace the owners of Nazi-looted artworks.

Estonia probes its past

An Estonian commission recently began investigating Soviet and Nazi-era crimes against humanity.

President Lennart Meri, who created the commission, said the panel would not try to build cases against war crimes suspects, but would instead try to set the record straight after more than 50 years of Soviet and Nazi censorship.

German official addresses Shoah

Germany's foreign minister pledged to work to preserve the memory of Holocaust victims. Joschka Fischer made the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial his first stop during his one-day visit to Israel.

Orthodox in Israel warn of revolt because of decisions on religion

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's Supreme Court has ordered stepped-up security for its justices after several fervently Orthodox leaders lashed out at recent court rulings, calling the judges anti-religious.

One of those leaders, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual head of the fervently Orthodox Shas Party, called the justices "oppressors of Jews" during a televised interview Wednesday.

A day later, President Ezer Weizman visited Yosef in an attempt to head off a planned rally Sunday in Jerusalem at which some 300,000 followers are expected to protest the court rulings.

Weizman also met with Chief Sephardi Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, saying afterward that he was trying to "prevent bloodshed."

Weizman made the appeal after fervently Orthodox leaders lashed out at the Supreme Court earlier in the week for issuing a series of rulings they feel undermine their way of life.

Speaking at a news conference Tuesday, the leaders warned of a "revolt" by the haredi, or fervently Orthodox community, if what they perceive as anti-religious court decisions continue.

Former Knesset member Moshe Gafni of the United Torah Judaism bloc criticized Chief Justice Aharon Barak for his "judicial dictatorship."

He accused Barak of issuing rulings that systematically "threaten our existence."

Rabbi Meir Porush, head of the Agudat Yisrael Party, said the court rulings contravene "our very Jewishness."

The haredi leaders were reacting to a string of recent high court decisions, including an order to allow Conservative and Reform representatives to serve on local religious councils.

That ruling prompted a number of haredi leaders to issue decrees that any high court ruling that runs counter to Orthodox religious law be ignored.

The fervently Orthodox leaders also were stung by a court ruling that canceled a decades-old arrangement under which yeshiva students are entitled to military exemptions and a separate decision allowing a kibbutz to maintain business operations on the Sabbath.

A day after the news conference, President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called separately for an end to attacks on Israel's legal system.

Calling the "president of the Supreme Court an enemy of the Jews is shocking," Netanyahu told Israel Radio on Wednesday. "I am not willing to accept it."

After talks with Israel's two chief rabbis Wednesday night, Netanyahu announced the establishment of a national forum for dialogue between religious and secular Jews. Netanyahu said the forum would include retired judges and spiritual leaders.

Meanwhile, the Knesset is due to convene for a special session next week to discuss the attacks on the high court.

House Speaker Dan Tichon said that while it was legitimate to criticize court decisions, "It is unacceptable to incite against those serving on the court."

Israeli police are investigating whether to bring up some of the haredi leaders on incitement charges.

According to their advertisements, haredi leaders are planning to use Sunday's rally and prayer vigil to ask their followers to pray for redemption from the "exile among Jewish haters of religion and Torah."

Ads placed by the council of rabbinic sages for Agudat Yisrael call on the public to come to the vigil to take a stand against the "Reform and Conservative cults, which are receiving assistance from the authorities in order to dig their nails into all that is dear and holy to us."

Some Orthodox officials expressed reservations about attending the prayer vigil.

"If the message is that Barak is an enemy of the Jews, I will not participate," said Education Minister Yitzhak Levy of the National Religious Party. □

New leader, name change for new entity expected soon

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — They're calling it "Newco," but not for long.

Over the next few weeks, federations are being asked to review four potential names for the entity born of the merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal.

In the meantime, the search for the new entity's top volunteer and professional leaders is nearing a conclusion, paving the way for the full transformation to come.

The nominating and search committees are meeting this week to discuss their well-guarded short lists of candidates for the chair of the 120-member board of trustees, the chair of the 25-member executive committee and the chief professional officer.

Philanthropist Charles Bronfman is said to be the front-runner for chairman of the board, and an announcement is expected within a matter of weeks, if not days.

The merger is expected to be ratified at the quarterly meetings of the federations this April in Washington.

The new entity is designed to give Jewish community federations the major decision-making power for allocating the millions of dollars raised each year for local, national and overseas Jewish needs.

But some community representatives reportedly expressed concern at last week's CJF executive committee meeting in Miami that the federations are not clearly represented in any of the four names for the new entity now under consideration.

"United Jewish Communities" led the pack in a market research survey of possible names for the new centralized fundraising body.

The other contenders were "United Jewish Alliance," "United Jewish Action" and simply "United Jewish Appeal."

Apparently, the survey of 403 individuals found that the term "federations" did not resonate with the younger Jews "Newco" is hoping to attract in its next incarnation.

At the Florida meeting, CJF executive committee members approved in principle documents specifying the terms of the merger, which has been over five years in the making.

Now the 280-page "Newco" documents have been sent to the federations for feedback and approval.

The United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Washington spearheaded the approval process, signing off on the documents sight unseen in their final form.

For the next three weeks, leaders from CJF, UJA and UIA are making a series of six regional presentations to brief federations on the vision and organizational plans for the merger.

The first stop on what some participants are calling the "road show" was the Southeast Florida region, which includes four federations and a regional office.

Following the presentation there, Jeffrey Klein, the executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, praised the effort to bring the future owners of "Newco" into the planning process.

"Anything that stimulates discussion and elicits input is productive," he said. □

Report: King Abdullah to renew strategic cooperation with Israel

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — One of the first acts of Jordan's King Abdullah will be to authorize the resumption of strategic cooperation with Israel, including the restoration of full-scale intelligence cooperation, according to well-placed sources in Amman quoted by the Foreign Report newsletter.

This is expected to lead to the reopening of an Israeli intelligence station in Amman — described as a "gold mine" for officials with Mossad, the Jewish state's foreign intelligence agency.

Abdullah is also reported to be ready to renew strategic understandings, such as the late King Hussein's secret agreement during the 1991 Gulf War granting the Israeli air force the right to fly over Jordan, if necessary, en route to Iraq.

In exchange, Israel will provide a written commitment not to conduct any operations in Jordan, such as the botched Mossad attempt in September 1997 to assassinate Hamas official Khaled Mashaal in Amman — a move that prompted Hussein to shut down the Mossad station.

The London-based newsletter reported this week that Mossad head Efraim Halevy met his Jordanian counterpart, Samikh Baktikhi, after Hussein's funeral on Monday and that they agreed to hold further talks. It also reported that the resumption of deep strategic cooperation is the result of past secret contacts between King Abdullah, then a major general commanding Jordan's Special Forces, and former Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, now a candidate for prime minister in Israel's May elections.

According to the newsletter, Mordechai delivered a favorable report after secretly visiting Amman at the request of Hussein to observe the training of Jordan's special forces units and to assess Abdullah's military abilities.

Abdullah made a reciprocal secret visit to Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv as Mordechai's guest last year, before his father's health deteriorated, and later urged his father to reinstate the special strategic relationship with Israel. □

Israel reduces extremists' terms

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel has reduced the sentences of five right-wing Jewish extremists serving prison terms for killing or planning attacks against Arabs.

Israel's releases of Palestinian prisoners in recent years justified the move, said Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, who had conveyed the recommendation to President Ezer Weizman.

Weizman, who subsequently approved the recommendation, also commuted the sentences of five Israeli Arab security prisoners, releasing one for health reasons.

The move came as Israel renewed its charge that the Palestinian Authority is conducting a "revolving door" policy in its jails, releasing Hamas activists and others wanted by Israel shortly after they are arrested.

Hisham Abdel Razek, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of prisoner affairs, said Israel had a one-sided policy of releasing Jewish prisoners who killed innocent Arabs, while refusing to free Palestinian prisoners who killed Israelis. □