



Daily News Bulletin

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82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Indyk to meet Assad in Damascus

The U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs is planning to discuss reviving Israeli-Syrian negotiations during a meeting Sunday in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Martin Indyk will not be visiting Israel during his Mideast trip. American officials would routinely make a stopover in Israel during such trips, but observers say this has changed during the tenure of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is perceived in Washington as reluctant to advance the peace process.

JDC backs merger plan

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee endorsed plans for the merger of the United Jewish Appeal, the Council of Jewish Federations and the United Israel Appeal.

JDC's board unanimously agreed to divest itself of ownership of UJA, which had provided funding for JDC's worldwide relief and rescue work. The JDC will continue to operate as a separate entity following the merger, which is scheduled to be finalized in April, pending approval of the UJA board at a meeting this month and the ratification of local federations.

Extension of emigre law sought

The top lobbyist in Washington for American Jewish federations asked Congress to renew for two years the law that eases immigration for Jews from the former Soviet Union.

Diana Aviv, director of the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations, made the request for an extension of the Lautenberg Amendment in testimony to a House International Relations subcommittee. "It is increasingly unsafe and potentially disastrous for Jews and other religious minorities residing" in the former Soviet Union, Aviv said in her testimony, citing the recent rise in anti-Semitism there.

Israeli high-tech deal sets record

An Israeli software company was sold for \$650 million to the Houston-based firm BMC. The purchase of New Dimensions, which develops systems management software, was the largest deal of its kind involving Israel's high-tech industry.

The previous record for a buyout was set by Mirabilis, bought last year by America Online for \$287 million.

Federation system reports campaigns are on the rise

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — Things are looking up for North America's most broad-based Jewish fund-raising campaign.

According to the final tally last week, UJA Federations of North America's 1998 annual campaign brought in \$763 million — up \$26 million over 1997 — with 107 of the system's 189 federated Jewish communities reporting significant increases in their individual campaigns.

"Obviously, the prevailing wisdom that the campaign has not been healthy is quite wrong," said Carole Solomon, the United Jewish Appeal's national campaign chair.

The upswing, Solomon and other UJA officials say, is part of a positive trend they expect to continue into the 1999 campaign.

The annual campaign totals represent moneys collected by local federations for community agencies and projects and for the UJA, which provides money for Jewish needs around the world through the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The 1998 annual campaign is the first to be billed under the banner of UJA Federations of North America, the new entity formed by the union of the UJA, the United Israel Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations. The merger is expected to be finalized at a national meeting of federation representatives in April.

The most surprising success story at federations across the country may be the growing number of alternatives to campaign fund-raising that have evolved over the past two decades. Such alternatives include endowment and other donor-advised funds.

"Different things turn on different people," said Robert Aronson, the executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

"Over the years, I think we're going to be seeing slow growth in the annual campaign if we do it right. But we could see dramatic growth in endowment" and capital campaigns.

"The dollars are there — it's a question of finding something that is right for the contributor in the area of Jewish life."

Whereas general contributions to campaigns are pooled and allocated according to prearranged formulas and committee recommendations, new funding options for donors put more decision-making power in their hands.

"Endowments and foundations launched 20 years ago are now in high gear," said Donald Kent, vice president for development and marketing for the Council of Jewish Federations.

These new philanthropic outlets attract donors because they offer direct involvement in grant-making, tax benefits and the opportunity for personal recognition. Their contributions in turn provide federations with investment instruments for long-term income.

Kent noted that federations have accumulated more than \$6 billion in assets from those funding sources during the last two decades.

Contrary to some fund-raisers' fears that the annual campaign would have to compete with endowments and restricted funds, the funding streams are proving to be mutually beneficial, UJA officials say.

In 1998, \$230 million was contributed to permanent endowments, while \$900 million poured in to over 7,000 donor-advised funds and foundations.

During the same period, \$540 million was contributed from endowments and

MIDEAST FOCUS

Barak welcomes inquiry result

Israel's Labor Party candidate for prime minister said he welcomed the completion of a state inquiry into a 1992 army training accident in which five commandos were killed and six others injured.

Ehud Barak, who was army chief of staff at the time, has been dogged by allegations that he hurriedly left the scene of the accident without attempting to help the injured. A previous state inquiry found no basis for the allegations.

Egypt backs May declaration

Egypt supports Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's plans to declare a Palestinian state in May, according to Egypt's foreign minister.

"We fully agree that the issue of a state of Palestine is indisputable," Amre Moussa said after Arafat met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo.

Arafat has come under international pressure to postpone a declaration of statehood in May, when the interim period for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process ends.

Pentagon to study IDF methods

A Pentagon study on ways to combat terrorism will include research on how the Israel Defense Force responds to terrorism.

"We will go and look wherever we can find the best practices," John Hamre, deputy U.S. secretary of defense, said in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

10-day port strike ends

A 10-day strike at Israel's ports was resolved with the signing of an agreement to give port workers a 4.5 percent salary increase.

A group representing Israeli businesses said it would sue strike organizers for causing what it said were millions of dollars of losses to exporters.

foundations to specific projects and charities, including some secular charities. Of these grants, \$140 million went directly into the annual campaign of the federations.

Often donors who establish endowments will be "your most loyal customer, the person who has been supporting the campaign for a long time," Solomon said.

"The nature of an endowment," explained Solomon, "is that it's locked in for a period of time," as opposed to the annual campaign, which depends on the "fickle finger of fate."

In 1993, for example, the campaign dipped from \$727 million to \$715 million and then hovered at \$718 million in 1994 and 1995, according to Michael Fischer, a vice president at UJA.

Funds raised by federations in Canada — \$84 million in 1998 — are not counted in the UJA's annual campaign, because their overseas allocations are administered by Keren Hayesod, the international counterpart to UJA.

He attributed the decline to donors concentrating their energies on separate fundraising drives from 1991 to 1994 in support of Operation Exodus, which helped Israel absorb hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union. Recovering from those efforts, Fischer said, the campaign has been gaining momentum over the past three years, with an increase of \$45 million overall between 1995 and 1998.

Officials said the momentum continued despite a brief period in which donations were adversely affected by donor concerns about religious pluralism-related issues in Israel. Still, with an increase of 4.6 percent over last year, the 1998 campaign kept ahead of the inflation rate for the first time in more than a decade.

Some local federation leaders attribute new enthusiasm to efforts by community campaigns to strengthen the local Jewish community through both programming and infrastructure.

Others attribute the recent improvements to greater personal attention to donors.

"I think the stock market hasn't hurt either," said Mark Lichtenstein, the chair of the Atlanta Jewish Federation's 1999 campaign, which, he reports, is up by \$2 million compared to the same time last year. □

Study: People can prolong life in order to celebrate Passover

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — A desire to participate in Passover can prolong a person's life, according to a professor of sociology at the University of California at San Diego.

David Phillips believes that older people can, in effect, postpone death in order to participate in an important occasion — be it a religious holiday, a 50th wedding anniversary or any other landmark date.

With the approach of the Christian millennium, Phillips' hypothesis is generating renewed interest.

In an 18-year research project, Phillips studied the mortality rates of nearly 2,000 Californian Jews. He found that the death rate dipped 35 percent below normal in the week before Passover and peaked by an equal percentage above normal in the week following the holiday. The study was published in the *Lancet*, a British medical journal.

"It is my hypothesis that those nearing death may feel that an extended family gathering at Passover offers the chance of saying hello and goodbye for the last time," says Phillips, an observant Jew and a native of South Africa.

The Passover findings were similar to those in an earlier statistical study by Phillips that focused on Yom Kippur and used records of Jewish deaths in New York and Budapest at the turn of the century.

Popular belief has long held that people can postpone dying — either through willpower or religious faith, Phillips says.

A historical example of such "bargaining" is cited in the deaths of Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Both men died on July 4, 1826. Friends and relatives of the two founding fathers said they had wanted to live until the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. □



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JEWISH WORLD

Vandals destroy Siberian shul as anti-Semitism rises in region

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — The scourge of anti-Semitism sweeping across Russia has reached the frozen tundra of Siberia — and Jews are reacting with increased levels of emigration.

Vandals this week went on a rampage at a synagogue in the city of Novosibirsk, destroying much of the synagogue in the attack.

They demolished the synagogue's furniture, tore up prayer books and scattered Torah scrolls and prayer shawls around the hall, according to Zalman Zaklos, the synagogue's rabbi.

In addition, a swastika and anti-Semitic graffiti were scrawled on the walls and ceiling, he said in a telephone interview from Novosibirsk.

No one was hurt in the incident.

The vandals left graffiti smeared with a cigarette butt that linked the attack to Russian National Unity, a neo-Nazi organization active throughout the country.

"It was a real pogrom," Zaklos said.

Some members of the community believe that the incident may have been a response to a high-profile Jewish event held in Novosibirsk over the weekend.

Approximately 1,000 people attended a Purim concert here after a well-publicized advertisement campaign in the local media, Jewish leaders say.

The synagogue, which is located on the city's Communist Street, is the only active Jewish house of prayer in Novosibirsk, a city of 1.5 million that is home to 10,000 Jews.

The run-down building, which had been confiscated from the Jews by the Communists, was returned to the community last year. The community had finished renovating one room and started holding services there only recently.

Zaklos, an Israeli and a Lubavitch representative, arrived in Novosibirsk just 10 days ago to take up the vacant position of city rabbi.

For several years, Jewish communities in Siberia had generally reported a low level of anti-Semitism, but the situation has been worsening lately amid a recent increase in Russian anti-Semitism, sparked in part by the nation's ongoing economic troubles.

Last fall, city residents found anti-Semitic leaflets stuffed in their mailboxes, and last week, anti-Semitic graffiti threatening Jews appeared in several places around the city, according to Elena Turetskaya, chairwoman of Esther, the Novosibirsk Jewish Welfare Center.

The police are investigating the attack on the synagogue, and a spokesperson for the city said it would allocate space to the Jewish community to conduct services until the synagogue hall is repaired.

In recent months, Novosibirsk has shown one of the highest rates of increase of Jewish emigration in all of Russia.

Last month, 170 people from the region emigrated to Israel, a 200 percent increase compared to last February.

Jewish officials say the economic crisis and fears of anti-Semitism are helping motivate those who had already tentatively decided to emigrate to finalize their moves. □

Gore urged to pressure Russia

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Two U.S. senators urged Vice President Al Gore to address the rise in anti-Semitism in Russia when he meets later this month with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

The two ranking members of a Senate foreign relations subcommittee, Sens. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Joseph Biden (D-Del.), said in a letter to Gore that the United States must make it clear to the Russian government that it "expects from it a strong commitment to human rights and religious freedom."

The letter came amid a rise in anti-Semitism that was prompted, in part, by the collapse of the Russian economy last August. □

Nixon said 'kike' on tape

President Nixon was heard making derogatory comments about Jews and Mexicans when secret White House tapes were played in a Washington federal courtroom.

On a previously unheard tape made in October 1971, Nixon called an immigration official in California a "kike." The case came to court after Nixon's estate sought compensation for the tapes, which were confiscated by the government when he resigned on Aug. 9, 1974.

European Jewish leaders meet

The European Jewish Congress held its first meeting since the election last October of its new president, Ignatz Bubis, who is also the leader of Germany's Jewish community. The meeting, held in the group's new offices in Berlin, focused on the absorption in Western Europe of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Attendees, who included Russian Jewish Congress President Vladimir Goussinsky, also focused on combating anti-Semitism and racism throughout Europe. The group plans to hold a May meeting in Moscow to discuss the recent increase in Russian anti-Semitism.

Bomb targets German exhibit

A bomb shattered glass at an exhibit in western Germany that has angered right-wing groups with its accusation that ordinary German soldiers took part in Nazi war crimes.

The exhibit, which has toured Germany the past four years, has often been met with right-wing protests. But this was the first time that it has been targeted by a bomber.

Austrian bank nears settlement

Austria's largest banking group is close to reaching a settlement of Holocaust-era claims against it, according to the World Jewish Congress.

Bank Austria, along with several German banks and industrial firms, is being sued by Holocaust victims who charge that it aided the Nazi war machine and profited when Jewish businesses were forced to sell their assets at rock-bottom prices.

Kosovo religious leaders to meet

The Appeal of Conscience Foundation plans to bring together religious leaders from the Yugoslav province of Kosovo during a meeting March 16-18 in Vienna.

The meeting is an "important stepping stone" to restore trust in the war-torn region and "fills a gap that cannot be filled by ground troops" or political negotiations, according to Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the interdenominational foundation.

Jewish heritage sites in Europe focal point of growing attention

By Ruth E. Gruber

PARIS (JTA) — In the Alsace region of eastern France, local tourist authorities cooperate with B'nai B'rith to sponsor Jewish culture festivals and help organize tourist trips to Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, ancient mikvahs and museums.

In Britain, a full-scale survey of Jewish heritage sites is being carried out with funding from the national lottery.

In Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and other countries, teams of experts from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem are carrying out detailed art and architectural documentation of synagogues and abandoned cemeteries.

As the scope of these initiatives, most of which were started during the last decade, clearly shows, more than half a century after the Holocaust and nearly 10 years after the fall of communism, the fate of Jewish heritage sites has become an issue of growing concern in Europe.

Indeed, the federally funded U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad has sponsored inventories of Jewish sites in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and elsewhere, and dozens of synagogues and cemeteries are being restored and protected throughout Europe.

Once virtually ignored, Jewish heritage sites are increasingly recognized as an important component of Europe's culture heritage.

"Jewish heritage in France," French Culture Minister Catherine Trautmann said in Paris recently, "is also the heritage of all the French people, just as the cathedrals of France also belong to France's Jews."

Trautmann spoke at an international conference held in January that demonstrated new concerns and shifts in attitude toward Jewish heritage.

Sponsored by the French government and held at the newly opened Museum of the Art and History of Judaism, the conference brought together scholars, researchers, museum directors, government officials, Jewish representatives and tourism consultants from across the Continent, as well as from Israel and the United States.

Speakers described conditions of Jewish monuments and ongoing preservation and documentation projects throughout Europe, addressing several questions:

- What should become of these monuments, which include thousands of abandoned cemeteries and neglected or ruined synagogues?
- In the absence of Jewish communities in many places, what purpose should these monuments serve?
- Which sites should be restored, how should they be paid for and who should care for them?
- Is it possible — or necessary — to devise a global strategy for the conservation and protection of Jewish monuments?

Officials have to overcome a mind-set in order to convince people to focus on these questions, said Valery Dymshits of the European University of St. Petersburg, who has carried out documentation of Jewish sites in Ukraine and Moldova. "Jews and non-Jews think we are the People of the Book, and no one has been interested in physical heritage. Now we have to convince people that Jews produced architecture, art and the like."

For decades after World War II, there was little interest — among Jews and non-Jews alike — in preserving or documenting Jewish sites that had survived both the destruction of the Holocaust and demographic shifts of Jewish populations. Many Jews wanted nothing to do with sites that they believed were vestiges of a closed chapter in Jewish history.

As recent as 10 years ago, information was hard to come by in many countries and little systematic documentation existed. Few publications addressed the issue. Centuries-old synagogues were used as warehouses or left to crumble, and even the location of many cemeteries had slipped out of memory.

But since the late 1980s — and particularly since the fall of communism opened up Eastern and Central Europe to tourists and scholars — Jewish heritage has become increasingly recognized as a rich legacy for Europe as a whole and embraced as an important component of multicultural society.

Despite the increased attention, the vast majority of Jewish heritage sites, particularly in former communist states, still remain in perilous condition.

But, as the Paris conference showed, the historic preservation of Jewish sites is now on the agendas of national monuments authorities and local organizations, including tourist bureaus, in most European countries.

It is also of growing concern to many Jewish organizations and communal bodies — particularly in former communist states where Jewish communal property seized during and after the Holocaust is being returned to Jewish ownership.

But given the large numbers, scattered geographical locations and poor condition of Jewish heritage sites, urgent challenges remain.

"Jewish heritage is an orphan, a victim in a generalized form of neglect and dereliction," said Max Polonovsky, the French Culture Ministry official in charge of Jewish heritage issues. "We are fighting against time." □

Student paper in New Jersey apologizes for controversial ad

By Lori Silberman Brauner
New Jersey Jewish News

WHIPPANY, N.J. (JTA) — A weekly student paper at a New Jersey college has apologized for publishing an advertisement calling for a national debate between a Holocaust-denier and the Anti-Defamation League.

The ad that ran in the March edition of *The Ramapo News*, the weekly paper at Ramapo College, "There Is No Liberty Without Free Speech and Open Debate," was placed by Bradley Smith's organization, the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust.

The newspaper's apology was read during a rally Monday sponsored by Ramapo College Hillel. Some 300 people reportedly attended the rally, which featured speakers from campus student groups, as well as Jeffrey Ross, director of campus affairs for the ADL.

"Considering the unfortunate publication of the ad in the first place, things could not have gone better here," said Dr. Michael Riff, director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, which is based at the college. □