



Daily News Bulletin

Vol. 77, No. 68

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

82nd Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Holocaust day ceremonies held

Holocaust survivors, Jewish leaders and elected officials gathered at the U.S. Capitol for an annual ceremony marking Holocaust Remembrance Day. The ceremony was one of many held in Israel and around the world.

In Macedonia, an Israeli delegation treating Kosovar refugees at an army field hospital held a Holocaust remembrance ceremony that was attended by representatives from NATO, the Macedonian government and the head of the Jewish community in Macedonia. [Page 4]

Yugoslav Jews fly to Israel

Forty young Yugoslav Jews, aged 18 to 35, flew Tuesday from Budapest to Israel for a 12-day trip aimed at acquainting them with life in the Jewish state. The flight, which was organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel, is the first stage of what the agency hopes will become a large-scale aliyah.

A second group of 20 Yugoslav Jews was to leave Wednesday, with another 90 — mostly families — to follow in a week or two.

Netanyahu vows expansion

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised to continue settlement expansion during a campaign address Tuesday before some 100 settler leaders.

His vow came two days after the visiting U.S. assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, Martin Indyk, criticized Israeli settlement construction, saying it could hamper peace efforts with the Palestinian Authority.

Meanwhile, Jewish settlers set up four mobile homes on a hillside near the West Bank town of Hebron.

They left the site after Israeli soldiers declared it a closed military area.

Britain, Iran to forge ties

Britain and Iran were expected to announce later this week that they are resuming full diplomatic relations.

These relations, which will be marked by an exchange of ambassadors, will signal the formal conclusion to a protracted dispute between London and Tehran. [Page 4]

FOCUS ON ISSUES

New name reflects federation effort to involve an 'under 50' Jewish crowd

By Julia Goldman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — What do you get when you add the Council of Jewish Federations to the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal?

Federation leaders from around the country meeting this week in Washington completed that equation with "United Jewish Communities: Serving Federations Across North America." That's the name chosen for North American Jewry's new central fund-raising and social-service organization.

The name was adopted after a passionate debate that exemplified some of the tensions inherent in forming a new national organization intended to change the culture of a central system that serves the needs of Jews locally, nationally and internationally.

After nearly six years of planning for the merger, the pervasive feeling at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington was that it is still too early to tell whether the merger will create a more perfect union.

Donald Schaffer, the president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, commended the effort by those most closely involved with restructuring the national system to make it more responsive to the needs and desires of local federations.

But, he said, echoing the view of many here: "Time will tell if they live up to what they've put forward."

In fact, as several delegates noted, the "they" is now "us."

The new national structure is intended to put more decision-making power in the hands of the federations, who have "ownership" in the governing bodies that will be set up, if plans go smoothly, over the next three months.

The ambitious plans for the merger necessitated the dissolution of the CJF and the UJA, whose boards effectively voted themselves out of existence.

The UJA remains somewhat autonomous for legal reasons, but it shrank its board of directors by two-thirds.

To facilitate the transition from three organizations to one, Stephen Solender, the executive vice president of UJA-Federation of New York, agreed to serve as the group's acting chief professional officer for six months.

Many in attendance said the next six months will be critical in creating the perception of progress.

"If people in the communities do not perceive the idea that the system will change," said Larry Joseph of Miami, "it will not meet with the success we'd hoped for."

Rabbi Irwin Kula, the president of CLAL: the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, asked to provide philosophical guidance for the delegates, challenged the leaders assembled to focus more on service than on power.

"No one has the answers. No one has the national vision," he told the leaders gathered Monday morning, advising against searching for conclusive solutions to improving the national system. "There are only ongoing processes."

Building respect among the leaders of the new organization and restoring credibility with the communities they serve topped his priority list. "The community is about trust and faith in people. It's not about the strategic plan," he said.

For his part, Charles Bronfman, the new organization's chairman of the board, delineated the challenges ahead by stressing philosophical issues such as inclusiveness and coalition building over structural details. He also called for redefining the relationship between North American Jewry and Israel, moving from a view of Israel solely as

MIDEAST FOCUS

Report: Israel wants Russian help

Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon asked Russia to mediate a deal with Syria for a pullback of Israeli troops from Lebanon and the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Damascus, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported. Sharon later denied the report.

Cabinet mulls Lebanon options

Israel's Security Cabinet met Monday night in Jerusalem to discuss the nation's options in the face of mounting military casualties in southern Lebanon. The meeting came after one soldier, Sgt. Noam Barnea, 21, was killed by a Hezbollah roadside bomb.

His death came amid reports that Israel is reducing its troops in Lebanon to reduce casualties.

Shas leader has heart attack

The spiritual leader of Israel's fervently Orthodox Shas Party was hospitalized Tuesday after suffering a heart attack. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, 78, was listed in stable condition at a Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem.

Four held for land dealer's murder

Israeli police said Tuesday they had arrested four Palestinians in connection with the May 1997 kidnapping and killing of an Arab man who sold land in Jerusalem to Jews. Police said the four told interrogators that Palestinian officials had ordered the shooting of the man in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

Abdullah clarifies views on Israel

Jordan's King Abdullah pledged he would never pursue relations with Israel "at the expense" of relations with fellow Arab countries, including Iraq, Syria, Egypt, or with the Palestinian self-rule government.

"With the new reign, we are opening a clean sheet with everyone based on mutual respect," Abdullah told the London-based Arab-language newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi in an interview published over the weekend.



Daily News Bulletin

Caryn Rosen Adelman, *President*
Mark J. Joffe, *Executive Editor and Publisher*
Lisa Hostein, *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.
© JTA Reproduction only by previous arrangement.

a recipient of Diaspora funds to one of Israel as a partner with equal responsibility "to nurture and build the new Jewish world."

Partnerships with synagogues should also be forged, he said, to imbue "Jewish peoplehood" with Jewish ritual and Jewish knowledge. And working relationships should be pursued with non-Jewish organizations and any other Jewish group that "supports our mission," including private philanthropies often viewed as competition for donor dollars.

He also called for greater representation in the new system of smaller federations and greater leadership opportunities for younger Jews and for women.

Many of these points emerged in discussions among the federation representatives as they reviewed the results of a survey that had been taken of about 400 people from among their ranks. Conducted by the New York-based Delta Consulting, the survey, commissioned by the new entity, isolated areas of concern that federations felt were critical to the new entity's success and those that stood in its way.

The survey found the trend that "major donors are increasingly choosing philanthropic alternatives to federated giving" to be a particular concern. Among the "critical barriers" to be overcome were "the impacts of conflicts related to pluralism, both locally and globally" and "old ways of decision-making" that left some federations feeling they "did not have a voice."

"Ideals to strive for," in the view of those surveyed, included strengthening Jewish communities in North America; finding "visionary and articulate" leadership; and building a dynamic and responsive organization. Transforming the mind-set of federations from "we-they" into "we-we" was also seen as a critical factor to the new entity's success.

The ballot vote for the new entity's name — for the past year it had been referred to as "UJA Federations of North America" and "Newco," a legal term for new, unnamed organizations — was intended as a first step toward greater democracy.

Asked to choose between "United Jewish Federations: Creating Communities that Care" and "United Jewish Communities: Serving Federations Across North America," most of the lay and professional leaders in attendance favored the former option going into the vote on Monday.

But market research conducted months in advance indicated that "United Jewish Communities" would have greater appeal among philanthropically active younger Jews.

"To the generation under 50," Bronfman explained in introducing the subject Monday morning, "when you say 'federation,' they think 'Star Trek.'"

Admitting that he was trying to "sell" federation leaders on the name United Jewish Communities, he said, "If we want to show a new face to the younger generation, maybe we should take a leap of faith and try that other name."

During the floor debate that preceded the ballot vote later that day, many federation representatives seemed unwilling to jump.

Several people passionately pointed out that "United Jewish Communities" did not accurately represent a federation-owned national system. "We spent years and years trying to get across the idea of ourselves as 'federation.' To take 'federation' out of the name completely would be a huge mistake," said Donald Lefton, a past president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, to hearty applause.

But Jon Friedenberg, the executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose, Calif., and a member of the naming committee, said that he had been swayed by the market data. "We as a system have experienced a net loss of 130,000 donors over the last five years alone," he said. "The question to think about is: Who are we naming this organization for?"

"The most innovative thing we've done," he said, was not choosing a name, but choosing a "target audience" of Jewishly involved people under 50.

Jennifer Laszlo of Washington, a member of the UJA's Young Leadership Cabinet — and, at 34, perhaps the youngest attendee in the room, spoke with excitement in support of the new name.

"Quite frankly, my generation sees this organization as 'alte kackers' with lots of money," she told the group, using a humorous Yiddish term for "old people."

"Let's change the name, change the logo, but not the commitment to making a difference in people's lives." □

JEWISH WORLD

Monitors to convene on claims

A monitoring committee of U.S. public finance officers is slated to meet Thursday in New York to review progress made by German, Austrian and French banks in settling Holocaust-era claims.

The panel headed by New York City Comptroller Alan Hevesi, whose threat last year of a boycott of Swiss banks helped persuade them to reach a \$1.25 billion settlement with survivors, will hear reports from the World Jewish Congress, the U.S. State Department and lawyers representing Holocaust survivors.

Nazi parley to occur in Argentina

An Argentine Jewish leader warned Monday that a neo-Nazi group is preparing to meet in Buenos Aires. During their meeting, the neo-Nazis may plan "a Nationalist-Socialist congress" next year in Chile, said Rogelio Chichowsky, president of the Jewish communal group DAIA.

Suit against Y.U. dismissed

The New York Supreme Court recently dismissed a lawsuit against Yeshiva University over its campus housing policy at its Albert Einstein Medical School. The American Civil Liberties Union had brought the suit, charging that the school's policy of offering campus housing to married heterosexuals, but not to gay partners, is discriminatory.

The Orthodox Union's Institute for Public Affairs praised the court's decision. "Yeshiva University should be entitled to conduct its affairs in consonance with its rights and values," said the institute's director, Nathan Diamant.

NATO strikes blamed on Jews

"Talmudic Jews" who "run the White House" are to blame for the NATO airstrikes on Yugoslavia, which are part of an "anti-Christian" campaign, according to a speaker at a pro-Serbian rally held in Sydney, Australia.

Speaking to a crowd this week of close to 5,000 Serbian Australians, Jack King, who founded a group that opposes Australian anti-racism legislation, told the demonstrators that they should not be angry at Americans, but only at the government, which is influenced by "Talmudic Zionist Jews."

Journalist gets \$10 million

A New Jersey jury last week awarded more than \$10 million to an Orthodox Jewish journalist in a discrimination case. Sara Lee Kessler, an Orthodox Jew, claimed, among other things, that the management of WWOR-TV fired her shortly after she filed a complaint that the station had failed to take her Sabbath observance into account when making assignments.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Yugoslav Jews fly to Israel to check out new way of life

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — After the Holocaust wiped out 85 percent of their community, some said it was over for Yugoslavia's Jews. Yet, somehow, they rebounded.

But can they survive another cataclysm?

With NATO airstrikes pounding away at their homeland for a third week, the future of Yugoslav Jewry is embarking for Israel.

On Tuesday, 40 young Jews, aged 18 to 35, flew from Budapest for a 12-day getting-to-know-Israel type of trip, courtesy of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

It is the first stage of what the agency hopes will become a large-scale aliyah. A second group of 20 was to leave Wednesday, with another 90 — mostly families — to follow in a week or two.

Clearly, the immediate priority is for Yugoslav Jews to be out of harm's way. But if they like Israel, and stay, the future looks bleak for the community back home.

"I'm not a prophet," said Aca Singer, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, who was in Budapest on Tuesday. "But if we continue like this, the Yugoslav Jewish community may not exist much longer."

Singer, 76, knows the pains of rebuilding.

Among the 67,000 or so Yugoslav Jews killed during the Holocaust were 65 of his relatives. Most of the 15,000 Jews who survived either emigrated or assimilated.

Today, after a decade of war and sanctions, there are 3,000 Jews.

But with the NATO assault that began March 24, Yugoslav Jewry once again faces an existential threat. About 250 mostly young Jews have so far fled north for refuge in Budapest, the Hungarian capital. Of those who remain, many are torn over whether to pack it in. The 1,000 or so elderly will likely stay. And all men aged 18 to 60 must now stay, in case the army needs them.

While many Jews feel solidarity with their Yugoslav countrymen, many more will surely rush for the border if NATO sends in ground troops.

As he spoke with JTA, Singer got word via his cellular phone that an anticipated busload of 60 more Yugoslav Jews — scheduled to arrive Wednesday in Budapest — would be bringing 40 Jews, or maybe even fewer. Such indecisiveness is a classic symptom of wartime duress, said Yechiel Bar-Chaim, the Yugoslavia country director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Indeed, many in the Israel-bound group say they would rather return home than make a permanent life in Israel. Few are gung-ho about aliyah; if they do it, they say, it may be more out of necessity than desire.

One young man headed for Israel said he'd likely stay for six months of intensive Hebrew studies, then reassess the situation. The fact that his parents remain in Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, holds him back.

Returning home "is no longer a question of war; the country is pretty much devastated as it is," said the man, 19, who like most interviewed asked that his name not be used.

"But I wouldn't want to make aliyah without my parents. You need support when you go to a new country. However, I think now they're just as anxious to get out as I was. Nobody wants to look at those fireworks every night."

Others have real concerns about life in Israel itself. One woman in Budapest with her son, 13, and daughter, 11, plans to visit later this month with the other families. Although the woman is not Jewish, the children's father is.

She is fearful of Israel becoming entangled in another Middle East war and the lingering image of Russian academics unable to find work other than sweeping streets.

"Every country has its disadvantages, and I'm not expecting to be treated like a princess," said the woman, 37.

"But all I want is to find my place under the sun, where I can work and feel safe and for my children to have opportunities in life." □

'This time the world acted': Wiesel hails action in Kosovo

By Daniel Kurtzman

WASHINGTON (JTA) — With the plight of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians fixed firmly in mind, Holocaust survivors, Jewish leaders and elected officials in Washington this week marked the last Holocaust Remembrance Day of the 19th century.

At a memorial ceremony inside the U.S. Capitol Rotunda and at a lecture by the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel at the White House, the message was clear: Serbian atrocities must not go unanswered — morality and the memory of the Holocaust demand no less.

Wiesel praised the United States for taking the kind of action in Kosovo that it failed to take to help prevent the Holocaust during World War II.

"This time the world was not silent. This time we did respond. This time we intervened," Wiesel said Monday night, speaking in the East Room as part of a lecture series hosted by President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, marking the approach of the millennium. Clinton said the vigilance survivors have shown has played an important role in helping the world to avoid past mistakes.

"We must always remain awake to the warning signs of evil," Clinton said. "And now, we know that it is possible to act before it is too late."

"The efforts of Holocaust survivors to make us remember and help us understand, therefore, have not been in vain."

Clinton noted that it was the American Jewish community that emerged as the "most ardent community, earliest, for the United States stepping forward in Kosovo."

Under the dome of the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday, hundreds gathered for an annual ceremony that resonated this year not only in light of the violence in Kosovo, but because it coincided with the 60th anniversary of the voyage of the St. Louis.

A handful of passengers on the ship who were among the 900 Jewish refugees turned away from American shores and sent back to Europe were on hand at the Capitol Hill ceremony, serving as a living testament to the dangers of apathy and indifference.

One of the youngest passengers on that ship, Ruth Mandel, recalled her family's experience, which for years she had been reluctant to speak about.

"Honestly I don't know for sure what we learned from the past," said Mandel, vice chairwoman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. "I have my doubts that recalling evil can make us good. But at least we have to try. As an act of faith, we have to try. As an act of memory, we have to try."

Some survivors of the St. Louis, who were accompanied by members of Congress as they lit candles at the rotunda ceremony, said afterward that they remain hopeful that the lessons of their experience had made a lasting difference.

"It's no longer an indifferent world," said Liesl Joseph Loeb, 70, who disembarked the St. Louis with her family to find haven in Britain and now lives in Philadelphia. "Hopefully something was learned from the Holocaust and from the St. Louis episode."

At his White House talk on "The Perils of Indifference: Lessons Learned From a Violent Century," Wiesel also evoked the story of the St. Louis, raising a series of pointed questions about why the Allies did not do more to stop the Holocaust.

"What happened? I don't understand," he said. "Why the

indifference, on the highest level, to the suffering of the victims?"

Miles Lerman, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, said, "As we remember the victims of the St. Louis and all of the eventual victims of the Holocaust, we have a better understanding why we are in Kosovo and why the free world cannot afford to stand with their hands folded while murder and mass atrocities run rampant."

"This is a lesson that the world has learned in the past and cannot afford to forget." □

Ignoring American sanctions, London to forge ties with Tehran

By Douglas Davis

LONDON (JTA) — Taking a starkly different approach to Iran than its American ally, Britain is preparing to resume full diplomatic relations with Iran.

These ties, which will be marked by an exchange of ambassadors, will signal a formal conclusion to a protracted dispute between London and Tehran.

The dispute was sparked nine years ago, when the late Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini imposed a fatwa — or death decree — on British Muslim author Salman Rushdie for alleged blasphemy in his book "The Satanic Verses."

Britain has been working to improve relations with Tehran for the past two years, but the breakthrough came only after an agreement on the Rushdie affair was reached when British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharrazi, at the United Nations last September.

The British Foreign Office has dismissed suggestions that the deal over Rushdie was badly flawed — the author is still living in hiding and under guard in Britain — or that he was sacrificed to commercial interests, particularly among those anxious for a piece of the action in Iran's oil and gas sectors.

While the U.N. deal did not win Rushdie his freedom — Iran claims it is incapable of reversing or rescinding the fatwa — the foreign ministers managed to finesse the issue.

Since then, Britain has condemned attacks on Iran by Iraqi-backed rebels and, more controversially, it has cracked down on fund raising by London-based Iranian opposition groups — an act that the groups describe as "appeasement" of Tehran.

Britain is understood to remain concerned about Tehran's nuclear aspirations.

This concern did not prevent Britain from announcing last month that it was lifting its ban on exporting military and security equipment and that it was supplying Iran with bulletproof vests to help border guards combat drug smuggling from Afghanistan.

The improved relationship will be reinforced in June when British Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett becomes the first British minister to visit Tehran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Meanwhile, Washington maintains its trade sanctions on Iran and says that, despite improvements since the 1997 election of the relatively moderate President Mohammed Khatami, Tehran still is not conforming to "acceptable standards of international behavior."

When asked about Britain's ties with Iran, State Department spokesman James Foley said Tuesday: "A number of our European allies and friends do have diplomatic relations with Iran. We're not against that." □