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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel may approve airlift

Israel may approve next week the immigration of an estimated 3,000 Jews from the Kwara region of Ethiopia. Outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set up a meeting on the issue after Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon called Wednesday for the immediate airlift of the Kwara Jews.

The acting chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Sallai Meridor, joined Sharon's call for expediting the immigration and asserted the Jewish Agency's preparedness for the influx.

Iran confirms arrests of Jews

Iranian officials on Thursday gave their first official confirmation that they have detained 13 Jews who are alleged members of a "Zionist" espionage ring.

The arrests had nothing to do with their religious affiliation, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Tehran Radio accused the United States and Israel of trying to "sensationalize" the arrests and described "any attempt to hype this affair as an act of foreign interference" in Iran's internal affairs.

German plan for fund rejected

Jewish groups and lawyers suing German companies for compensation for World War II slave laborers rejected a German proposal to settle all claims for \$1.7 billion.

The plan announced by German firms on Thursday would only compensate those laborers who were held in concentration camps for more than six months, among other restrictions.

Jewish negotiators said the amount was inadequate and failed to recognize the companies' moral and legal obligations.

Two executives leave UJC

Two executives with the Council of Jewish Federations are leaving the organization, which is now part of the newly formed United Jewish Communities.

In July, Jay Yoskowitz, the executive vice president of CJF, will take the No. 2 spot at the American Society for Technion-Israel Institute for Technology; and Howard Adler, a senior associate executive vice president, will start in a senior management position at the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Yugoslav Jews living in Budapest worry over whether to return home

By Michael J. Jordan

BUDAPEST (JTA) — With an end to the NATO bombing of Serbia and a peace deal for Kosovo signed, the Yugoslav Jews who sought haven in Hungary are beginning to contemplate what life will be like if they return home.

For many of them, there is the looming concern of how they will be received in Yugoslavia.

Shortly upon their arrival here after the NATO strikes began in late March, they feared that the exodus of 500 of Yugoslavia's 3,500 Jews would spur resentment among their neighbors. But now that fear may not materialize, given the fact that some 200,000 Serbs have reportedly fled the bombardment as well.

Instead, there are now rumors here that some people in the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade are alluding to the Jewish origin of several American policymakers involved with the air strikes — including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger.

"Serbs have never had any particularly strong anti-Semitism — except from some hooligans and a bit during" World War II, said one elderly man.

"But now we have to be careful, because many of the Americans involved are Jewish somehow. We hear that some extreme Serbs are saying that this is a war of Jews against Serbs."

This man, like others here, is cautious about the future.

After the airstrikes come to an end, he plans to wait a week or two to see how events unfold.

He fears, for example, a power struggle that will erupt into civil war between supporters and opponents of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

Analysts, meanwhile, warn about two other scenarios: a coup in Montenegro, the tiny republic that, along with Serbia, now makes up Yugoslavia; and ethnic conflict in Vojvodina, a province in northern Serbia that borders Hungary and has a large Hungarian minority.

Nevertheless, once the dust settles in the current conflict, many of the older Jewish refugees in Budapest will eagerly return home. Not so for the younger generation, most of whom are already considering life after Yugoslavia.

Earlier they had been skeptical about emigrating to Israel. But the steady destruction of their country — on top of a decade's worth of war, sanctions and oppression under the thumb of Milosevic — has clinched their decision to move on.

Up to 250 Yugoslav Jews are already in Israel, while 50 to 100 are with family around the globe. Still, Israel seems the best bet for the younger Jews here.

Anna, a 21-year-old geography student from Belgrade, is among those contemplating aliyah. Her father, an architect, emigrated to Beersheba in 1991. Her older brother later joined him. Anna's mother, on the other hand, has stayed in Belgrade throughout the NATO bombardment. She urged Anna to flee to Budapest a month ago, and now wants her to join her father in Israel.

Complicating matters, though, is that Anna's boyfriend of six years is not Jewish. So they've decided to marry and give Israel a try together.

"There was a little bit of romance to it," said Anna, "but it was more like, 'Well, now we have to get married.'"

Leaving behind her mother and friends will be difficult, Anna said. But she is also

MIDEAST FOCUS

Israeli dies in Lebanon

Hezbollah gunmen killed an Israeli officer Wednesday night during clashes in the southern Lebanon security zone. Lt. Roi Keller, 21, was the 10th Israeli soldier killed in the region this year.

Muslims clash with mayor

Club-wielding Muslim protesters in Israel scuffled Thursday with the Christian mayor of Nazareth, whom they accused of ignoring their rights.

Despite a law requiring monthly meetings, Mayor Ramez Jeraisi has only convened the City Council once since municipal elections last November gave the Islamic Movement a majority on the council.

The city of 60,000 has been tense since April, when clashes over land use erupted.

Officer indicted on abuse

An Israeli border police officer was indicted by the Jerusalem District Court on charges of abusing Palestinians in his custody. According to prosecutors, Eran Nakash assaulted Palestinian teen-agers he was transferring between prisons last month.

Syria balks at united front

The Palestinian Authority called on Syria on Wednesday to take part in an Arab summit that will seek to present a united front in peace talks with Israel.

Palestinian and Egyptian officials called for the summit in the wake of Ehud Barak's election as Israeli prime minister, but Syria has balked at the idea.

Tunnel to Gaza discovered

The Israeli army discovered on Wednesday a secret tunnel between Egypt and the Gaza Strip that officials said is being used to smuggle people and goods. The army, which has discovered dozens of such tunnels in recent years, claimed that some of them are being used to smuggle arms across the border.

conflicted about abandoning her homeland on the eve of a grueling reconstruction process.

"I have only one life to live, so I want to try to live it as good as I can," she said. "I don't know. Maybe I'm selfish. I'm not sure. Maybe if I knew I have a second life, or third or fourth — but there's no proof of that. So I need to take care of this one."

It had been a roller coaster week for those waiting to see if the peace deal would be sealed.

As word initially spread that peace was finally at hand, many of the 130 Jews at the no-frills Park Hotel rushed to pack their bags for the bus trip home. They even planned to celebrate with wine and beer. But the joy was fleeting.

Talks broke down over the weekend as NATO officials blamed the Yugoslav side — already notorious for its broken promises — for failing to hold up its end of the bargain. On Monday, in the Park's dimly lit lobby, a crowd of mostly older women sat on the burgundy, faux-leather couches, somberly speculating about the future.

One middle-aged woman, emerging from a beginners Hebrew class held in the dining room, summed up their gloom.

"Today is the worst day since the bombing began, in terms of wishes and hopes and optimism," said the woman, a lawyer whose 17-year-old son and 20-year-old daughter are now safely in Israel.

"A Hungarian friend told me 'Mazel Tov! There's peace!' But we see that was premature. We thought we'd finally seen the light at the end of the tunnel, but now we realize the light may be further away than we thought."

To these refugees, the issue was no longer the status of Kosovo and who was responsible for triggering the flight of up to 1 million Kosovar refugees. Instead, like many of their compatriots back home, they simply wanted the bombings to stop.

"Just give NATO whatever it wants, even if we have to surrender completely," said a 61-year-old man at the Park Hotel.

"What can we do? We can't fight against the whole world. It's like a small boxer against Mike Tyson — it's better to not even get in the ring." □

Alien in new 'Star Wars' movie brings charges of anti-Semitism

By Adam D. Ckter
The New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) — For a long-ago denizen of a galaxy far, far away, one of the new "Star Wars" characters has run into a decidedly contemporary American problem.

The pint-sized, hook-nosed, flying junk dealer from planet Tatooine has been labeled anti-Semitic.

Calls have reached Anti-Defamation League offices across the country, complaining that the Watto character in "Episode I: The Phantom Menace" is a Jewish stereotype in the vein of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice.

In the film, the unsavory Watto — a computer-generated image — drives a hard bargain over spaceship parts and balks at keeping a deal to release child-slave Anakin Skywalker. Some interpret Watto's dialect as Yiddish-sounding.

"Even in a galaxy far away, the Jews are apparently behind the slave trade," gripes Bruce Gottlieb of the online magazine Slate, who also thinks producer George Lucas — who has labored to attach a social consciousness to the series — mocks Caribbeans and demonizes Japanese.

The ADL has decided not to force the issue.

Watto "arguably has certain characteristics of anti-Semitic or anti-Arab stereotypes," said the group's national director, Abraham Foxman. "However, it would be stretch to identify the creature as a mean-spirited Jewish caricature."

A spokeswoman for Lucas, Lynne Hale, said it was "absurd" to read an ethnic meaning into the characters.

"There is nothing in 'Star Wars' that is racially motivated," said Hale in a statement. "[It] is a fantasy movie set in a galaxy far, far away. To dissect this movie as if it has a direct reference to the world that we know today is absurd." □



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JEWISH WORLD

First lady postpones trip

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton postponed Thursday a trip to Israel scheduled for later this month.

The State Department recommended the delay "because Israel is still in the process of forming a government," according to a statement from her office.

Clinton, who has already postponed the trip once because of Israel's election, said she would set a new date "as soon as possible."

Christian Coalition splits up

The Internal Revenue System denied tax-exempt status to the Christian Coalition because of the group's partisan political activity.

The conservative Christian lobby announced following the ruling that it would split into two entities — one that will engage in political activity and the other in voter education. The coalition has come under fire in recent years for distributing voter guides that critics have called blatantly partisan.

Accused war criminal leaves U.S.

A 74-year-old New York man accused of hiding his Nazi-era past left the United States and renounced his U.S. citizenship, the Justice Department said Thursday.

In a lawsuit filed last year but now dropped, U.S. prosecutors charged that Dmytro Sawchuk served at an SS-run training camp in Poland in 1943 and as an armed guard at two Nazi slave labor camps for Jews.

Meanwhile, a 76-year-old Ukrainian native living in Ontario was a Nazi collaborator who covered up his past to attain entry to Canada in 1948, a Canadian judge ruled this week.

The decision clears the way for the country's Cabinet to revoke Serge Kisluk's citizenship and call for a subsequent deportation hearing.

Wallenberg monument unveiled

A monument to Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg was recently unveiled in the Stockholm suburb where he was born.

The 13-foot-tall statue depicts Wallenberg with his hands behind his back, symbolizing how he secretly gave Swedish passports to Jews fleeing the Nazis when he served as a diplomat in wartime Budapest.

Rabbi sentenced in bingo scam

An Ohio rabbi who admitted to skimming hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of instant bingo cards received three years of probation Tuesday and was ordered to do 400 hours of community service. Rabbi Jacob Lustig, 72, who served for more than 20 years as rabbi of Kneseth Israel Congregation, was also ordered to turn over more than \$920,000.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Giving to religious institutions is oft-ignored area of Jewish charity

By Julia Goldman

NEW YORK (JTA) — A recent report on American philanthropy shines a light on an area of giving that has long stood in the shadows in the American Jewish community.

According to "Giving USA," contributions to religious causes accounted for the largest share of American philanthropy in 1998.

The report was released May 25 by the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel Trust for Philanthropy, a New York-based non-profit organization promoting public understanding of philanthropy. Donations to religious congregations and denominations brought in some \$76 billion from 1997 to 1998, representing 43.6 percent of a record \$175 billion in allocated giving last year.

This accounting includes all tax-deductible gifts to religious institutions, including offerings, donations and membership dues, but not tuition to religious schools.

When the Jewish community looks at its philanthropic pie chart, however, this kind of religious giving is not usually part of the picture.

"The pieces that get the most attention are the pieces that go to the federation world," said Jack Wertheimer, an authority on Jewish communal philanthropy, referring to the fund-raising efforts of Jewish community federations and the United Jewish Appeal.

But the pieces that go to Jewish religious institutions, Wertheimer said, "may be greater."

The Jewish community tends to focus on the success of charities such as the community federations of New York and Chicago, American "friends of" Israeli universities and organizations such as Hadassah — the Women's Zionist Organization of America, which rank annually among the top 400 philanthropies in the country.

In his article on "Current Trends in American Jewish Philanthropy" in the American Jewish Committee's 1997 American Jewish Yearbook, Wertheimer estimated that "the combined annual budgets of synagogues, Jewish denominational institutions and Jewish day schools easily exceed \$2 billion annually — and perhaps closer to \$2.5 billion.

"In other words, they take in between \$750 million to \$1 billion more than comes to federations from Jewish sources annually," he wrote.

In 1998, the combined annual campaign of what is now called the United Jewish Communities — the new entity formed through the merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal and the United Israel Appeal — raised \$760 million for domestic and overseas needs.

Wertheimer acknowledges that comparing contributions to the UJC with Jews' "religious giving" is a complicated proposal.

But he believes that more attention should be paid to the religious sector of Jewish giving, which represents a significant portion of American Jews' yearly budget and affects the amount they are able to contribute elsewhere.

The significant amount of money flowing into the religious sector "says a great deal about the Jewish family budget and the Jewish communal budget, how money is being spent and what the priorities are," Wertheimer, provost of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America, said in a telephone interview.

"If you don't count any of that, it's easy to downplay the importance of that sector." Like federations, synagogues are "a critically important address," Wertheimer said, attracting "more members than any other Jewish institution besides cemeteries."

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey found that of American households in which all members are Jewish, 41 percent pay dues to a synagogue or temple. Synagogue affiliation, the survey says, is the "most widespread form of formal Jewish connection."

Ann Kaplan, the Association for Fund-Raising Counsel Trust's research director and the editor of its report, said that religion has historically represented the largest share of Americans' charitable giving.

"The roots of philanthropy were with religious institutions," she said. "They were the earliest non-profits, in a sense." □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**British group launches campaign to honor man as Righteous Gentile***By Douglas Davis*

LONDON (JTA) — Unlike the legendary Oskar Schindler, Albert Gustave Bedane's acts of courage were not enacted in the horror-filled world of wartime Poland.

His heroism was played out on British soil — on the Nazi-occupied Channel Island of Jersey, which now glories in a reputation as a tax haven and home to the super-rich.

Now, after a result of the efforts of an amateur historian in Jersey, the London-based Holocaust Educational Trust has launched a campaign to convince the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem to make Bedane a Righteous Among the Nations.

Most of Jersey's prewar Jewish population had left before the Nazi invasion in June 1940.

A total of 12 islanders who were registered as Jews were deported. The Jewish community of Jersey is now at about 150.

When the Nazis invaded the tranquil island, Bedane, a French-born veteran of World War I, was a successful physiotherapist with a thriving practice in Jersey's capital, St. Helier.

During the occupation, which ended in 1945, German officers frequently sought out Bedane in his rambling five-story home — now a hotel — to soothe their aching limbs.

What the Germans did not know was that while Bedane was treating them in his clinic, much of the rest of the building was hiding escaped prisoners of war, escaped slave laborers — and a small, middle-aged, Dutch-born Jewish woman, Mary Erica Richardson.

While Richardson is the only Jew definitively known to have been saved by Bedane, it is assumed that he also harbored others during the war.

If any of the people he kept secretly at his home had been discovered by the Nazi occupiers, Bedane knew he would have been shot.

Among those "guests" was Richardson, the Jewish wife of a retired, non-Jewish British sea captain, who hid in an ancient stone cellar barely 4-and-a-half-feet high.

She had escaped from the backdoor of her apartment while her husband, pretending to be senile, had kept the Germans who had come to arrest her waiting at the front door.

Despite efforts to find her, in which Nazi officials were aided by Jersey's attorney general and local police, Richardson remained safe in Bedane's home until the Nazi retreat at the end of the war.

The only surviving guest that Bedane sheltered is 87-year-old Francis Le Sueur, an islander who was wanted by the Germans for his activities in the Jersey underground.

Now living near the town of Dinard in northern France, Le Sueur vividly recalls playing cards with Richardson before he decided to take his chances and escape to France.

He also remembers his first encounter with Bedane.

"When I arrived, he showed me into a windowless room, little bigger than a cubicle which had perhaps once been used for patients. Bedane said to me: 'You're going to stay in this room and I don't want you to come out.'

"But I was just one of many."

Last week, Le Sueur described how Bedane had confided in him that Richardson was hiding because she was Jewish.

"I remember we discussed this matter quite fully, as the question of race and religion was, and still is to me, a matter of small importance."

Bedane's wife, Clara, died during the war and his daughter, Valerie May, was last heard of living in Australia in the 1950s.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the anxiety of the period took its toll on Bedane.

He collapsed soon after the war and was admitted to a hospital, where he was diagnosed as suffering from the delayed effects of chronic stress.

When he died in 1970 at the age of 76, his acts of selfless heroism were neither recognized nor rewarded by the West.

His sole memento was an inscribed gold watch, a gift from the Soviet government in appreciation for the Russian slave laborers he had saved.

Richardson and her husband left the island immediately after the war.

The last trace of her is a letter she wrote to Bedane from a clinic in Austria thanking him for having saved her life.

The Holocaust Educational Trust, headed by Lord Janner, has only recently learned of Bedane's wartime heroism through the efforts of a 42-year-old Jersey property dealer and amateur local historian, Frederick Cohen.

"As president of the Jewish community in Jersey, I felt I had an obligation to record the story," Cohen said in an interview.

"And once I started, I carried on until I had completed the record."

Janner says his organization is submitting Bedane's name to Yad Vashem because it is satisfied, having seen the documentation and having heard the evidence, that "he was a hero and should be honored."

The request to Yad Vashem has also been endorsed by Britain's former chief rabbi, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, and David Cesarani, director of the Wiener Library, a London-based Holocaust documentation center.

"Little was known until now, but he saved many lives, including that of Mrs Richardson, for whom he risked everything," says Janner. According to Janner, Bedane "fulfills every criteria for recognition" by Yad Vashem. "There was never any suggestion that he sought or received payment or reward for his courageous acts," he adds. □

Rabbi sentenced in bingo scheme

NEW YORK (JTA) — An Ohio rabbi who admitted to skimming hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of instant bingo cards has received three years of probation and was ordered to do 400 hours of community service.

Rabbi Jacob Lustig, 72, who served for more than two decades as rabbi of Kneseth Israel Congregation, was also ordered on Tuesday to turn over more than \$920,000.

Sales of the bingo cards brought in more than \$1 million in cash during 1996 and 1997, but his congregation received only some \$25,000.

Lustig and three others involved in the case pleaded guilty last month to theft charges. □