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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Premier defends Lebanon raids

Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended last Friday's bombing raids on Lebanon. Israel will not "not remain idle in the face of an assault on its residents," he told his Cabinet on Sunday.

Israel bombed power stations and bridges near Beirut in response to Hezbollah rocket attacks that killed two residents in northern Israel and wounded at least 12, one seriously. [Page 3]

Barak signs up 3 parties

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak moved closer to forming his government after signing coalition agreements over the weekend with three parties.

Under a deal reached Saturday night, the secular Meretz Party received two portfolios, including the Education Ministry.

Barak finalized deals last Friday with the immigrants rights Yisrael Ba'Aliyah Party, which received the Interior Ministry, and with the National Religious Party, which got the Housing Ministry.

KLA orders Jewish leader out

People claiming to be representatives of the Kosovo Liberation Army have ordered the president of the tiny Jewish community in Kosovo to vacate his home and leave town, according to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. [Page 2]

German House backs memorial

The German Parliament approved, by a 314-209 vote last Friday, a design for a Berlin Holocaust memorial that has been mired in controversy for more than 10 years. Berlin officials, citing the threat of neo-Nazi vandalism, reportedly said they may not honor the Bundestag's decision.

Fire strikes Venice Ghetto

Several families were evacuated after a fire broke out Sunday in an apartment in Venice's New Ghetto. A spokesman for the Venice Jewish community told JTA that no Jewish community property was damaged.

The ghetto, heart of the city's historic Jewish quarter, is the site of the Jewish museum, Jewish communal offices and several centuries-old synagogues.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Evil goes on display after original Nuremberg Laws are rediscovered

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) — After resting 50 years in the vault of a small California library — its existence unknown even to Holocaust scholars — the original manuscript of Germany's Nazi-era Nuremberg Laws will go on display this week at a Jewish museum in Los Angeles.

The Skirball Cultural Center was expected to officially announce Monday that it has received on indefinite loan the four-page document bearing Adolf Hitler's cramped signature, which in 1935 deprived Germany's Jews of all legal protection.

"It is like finding an original copy of the U.S. Constitution — but unfortunately a very evil one, signed by the man who instigated it. There's a strange emotional power that comes with the original — some of the terror and horror is attached," said Saul Friedlander, a professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles and a child survivor of the Holocaust who has written about the early Nazi years.

The document had remained in the Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif., since June 11, 1945, when Gen. George Patton Jr. presented the document to the library.

Patton, whose family home adjoined the Huntington estate, had a few weeks earlier given another gift to the library — a deluxe, ceremonial copy of Hitler's "Main Kampf," bound in white leather with bronze clasps, embossed with a gold swastika and weighing 35 pounds. The book, captured by Patton's troops near the German town of Weimar and inscribed by the general, also disappeared into the Huntington Library's vault.

During the next 50 years, Huntington presidents and librarians knew what was in the vault, but couldn't figure out what to do about it.

The Huntington complex, consisting of the library, art collection and botanical gardens, is primarily devoted to British and American history and art. Its officials, who believed that Patton's presents were not appropriate for display, never thought of offering them to a more appropriate institution.

What triggered the change was the opening of the Skirball museum in 1996, when Rabbi Uri Herscher, its founder and president, invited Robert Skotheim, president of the Huntington Library, for a tour. Despite their different backgrounds, the two men hit it off. Their friendship deepened after Herscher invited his colleague to a Passover seder, and the idea of transferring the contents of the Huntington vault gradually ripened.

Last March, Herscher was invited to the Huntington to inspect Patton's gifts.

First, Huntington librarian David Zeidberg presented Herscher with the copy of "Mein Kampf."

"As soon as he handed me the book, I fumbled and dropped it," recalled Herscher recently in an emotional 90-minute interview with JTA. "I felt that I was holding a death warrant in my hands. Then I started crying. Then I went to the bathroom and for 10 minutes washed my hands over and over again."

For Herscher, the Nuremberg Laws have personal meaning as well.

"It was the publication of the Nuremberg Laws that convinced my father and my mother, who had not met at that time, to separately leave Germany and emigrate to Palestine," Herscher said.

The exposure to the Skirball museum has also affected the Huntington president. In a recent handwritten note to Herscher, Skotheim wrote, "We Norwegians are not very expressive. But I must confess my deep satisfaction at being in a position wherein I

MIDEAST FOCUS

Weizman backs Golan withdrawal

Israel should return the Golan Heights to Syria as part of a peace agreement between the two nations, Israel's president said.

Such a move would be "for the good of Israel, the interest of Israel's economy and our capacity to absorb more immigrants," Ezer Weizman said in an interview published Saturday in the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat.

Sharon probe closed

Israeli law enforcement officials closed an investigation, without bringing charges, into the conduct of outgoing Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, who is also the acting Likud Party leader.

Israel's attorney general last week found insufficient evidence to support allegations that Sharon arranged a business deal for an associate in exchange for favorable testimony in a 1997 civil trial.

Gay Pride parade held in Tel Aviv

Thousands of people marched and danced through northern Tel Aviv last Friday as part of the city's second annual Gay Pride Day. The event also included speeches by politicians, most from left-wing and center parties, in support of the marchers.

Sara Netanyahu wins court case

The wife of outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won a two-year court battle to prevent her ex-husband from publishing letters and taped conversations with her during their marriage.

Ancient factory unearthed

Archeologists last week discovered a 2,000-year-old factory underneath Jerusalem that made tools used in the Second Temple.

An archeologist was quoted by Israel Television as saying the factory, in which tables and cups were also made, was located on the edge of the Old City.



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could make the transfer of documents happen. There is no doubt that the Holocaust is the governing event for our generation."

It "assaults all of us, spiritually and intellectually, even though most of us were not attacked literally or physically."

Receiving the original Nuremberg Laws triggered another line of thought for Herscher. "We have a small Holocaust exhibit at the Skirball, but it shows only the results of what happened there. Here I held one of the causes of the tragedy, a missing link," he said.

The three parts of the Nuremberg Laws were hastily drafted at a police station over a two-day weekend for presentation, and instant enforcement, at the massive "Party Rally of Freedom" on Sept. 15, 1935. They were typed on black-bordered, but otherwise nondescript, paper.

The first part, titled "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor," forbade marriage and sexual relations between Jews and "citizens of German blood." This section contains the only handwritten change in the typed text, when someone crossed out the word "sexual" in strictures against "extramarital sexual intercourse."

In the second part, those not of German blood are stripped of their citizenship, and the third part designates the swastika as the official German flag. Jews are forbidden to fly the national flag but are permitted to display the "Jewish colors."

UCLA historian and political psychologist Peter Loewenberg said the 1935 edicts had long-range consequences.

"The Nuremberg Laws represent a major step in the increasing marginalization of Jews from German life," he said. "In order to carry out the program of 'The Final Solution,' the target group first has to be marginalized, dehumanized, and removed from the code of citizenship. This is a critical moment. This legally excludes them. The next step is humiliation — Kristallnacht, 1938 — then the wearing of the yellow star, then deportation and finally the death camps."

Almost 10 years after the laws were passed, on April 28, 1945, men of the 203rd Counter Intelligence Corps arrived at the town of Eichstatt, near Nuremberg.

As Patton described the action later, "They came to a stairway which they went down with grenades, in case there were any Germans. There were no Germans. They found a vault, not open, and persuaded a German to open it for them. In it they found this thing. That was all (underlined) that was in the vault."

The "thing" was a large manila envelope, secured with the wax seals of the Third Reich. Inside the envelope were the Nuremberg Laws. □

KLA reportedly forced Kosovar Jewish leader from Pristina home

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — People claiming to be representatives of the Kosovo Liberation Army have ordered the president of the tiny Jewish community in Kosovo to vacate his home and leave town, according to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia.

Further details were not immediately available.

A spokesman for the Belgrade-based federation told JTA that Chedar Princevic had been visited at his home in the Kosovar capital of Pristina on Sunday by "men who claimed to be representing the KLA."

"They told him to vacate his apartment and clear out," the spokesman said. "We don't know what has happened."

He added that he has been trying to reach Princevic by phone from Belgrade to receive more information, but it has been impossible to get through.

Several dozen Jews — including about 14 children — live in Kosovo, most of them in Pristina. Most of them stayed put in the province during the NATO air campaign, although children were sent briefly to relatives elsewhere in Serbia.

Jewish communal organizations in Yugoslavia repeatedly issued statements protesting the NATO air campaign, and, while deploring the plight of Kosovar Albanians, expressed loyalty to the Yugoslav state in the face of the attacks. □

JEWISH WORLD

Panel to Clinton: Pressure Iran

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called on President Clinton at its inaugural meeting to continue to pursue the release of 13 Jews in Iran charged with spying for Israel and the United States.

The 10-member commission was created last year to advise the president on possible U.S. responses to religious persecution around the world.

Settlement claims launched

Groups representing Holocaust victims or their heirs seeking payment from a \$1.25 billion settlement reached last August with several leading Swiss banks are launching the application process for those who believe they are eligible to receive funds under the settlement.

People who may qualify for money from the fund include those who held assets in Swiss banks before May 9, 1945, those whose assets were looted by the Nazis and held by Swiss institutions, those who were slave laborers for firms that dealt with Switzerland and those who unsuccessfully sought entry into Switzerland to avoid Nazi persecution.

Individuals who believe they are eligible may call 888-635-5483 or visit the World Wide Web at www.swissbankclaims.com

Ukraine bars Jewish leader

Ukraine's State Security Service banned a Ukrainian Israeli business mogul from entering the former Soviet republic for five years for allegedly causing "considerable damage to Ukraine's economy" through his business activities.

Vadim Rabinovich is one of the leaders of Ukraine's 500,000-member Jewish community.

Trial backed for Mossad agent

A Swiss judge is recommending that an agent of Israel's Mossad foreign intelligence service be tried for illegal acts on behalf of a foreign state. The agent was one of five arrested in February 1998 after a bungled Mossad attempt to wiretap the Bern apartment of a Lebanese man alleged to have links to Hezbollah.

Court to hear religion law appeal

A Moscow court is slated to hear an appeal this week by a branch of Jehovah's Witnesses that is seeking to overturn a ruling banning the group.

Prosecutors, who charge that the group is a cult that destroys families, fosters hatred and threatens lives, are attempting to use a provision of the nation's religion law that imposes bans on groups found guilty of inciting hatred. Since the law was enacted in 1997, some Jewish groups have been worried that it would be used against them.

Escalation by Israel, Hezbollah marks worst violence in 3 years

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The latest eruption of violence along Israel's northern border has spawned varying assessments of what exactly sparked the escalation — and whether it will affect fledgling peace overtures between Israel and Syria.

In a spiraling cycle of violence, nine Lebanese were killed when Israel bombed power stations and bridges near Beirut in an operation that began June 25.

The Israeli air assault came in response to Hezbollah rocket attacks that day which killed two residents in northern Israel and wounded at least 12, one seriously.

The attacks marked the heaviest cross-border violence since a cease-fire in 1996 ended Operation Grapes of Wrath, Israel's 16-day campaign in Lebanon against Hezbollah.

The fighting was halted last Friday morning after U.S. officials conveyed a message from Israel to Syria that hostilities would escalate if Damascus did not rein in Hezbollah, Israeli security officials said.

The violence came against the backdrop of tentative overtures between Israel and Syria prompted by the May victory of Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak, who pledged during the election campaign to pull Israeli troops out of southern Lebanon and pursue a peace agreement with Damascus.

Far from being left out of the loop, Barak gave his tacit approval to the raids, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported Sunday.

Some Israeli defense officials are maintaining that Hezbollah used the assault to signal to both Syria and Israel that any future arrangement regarding Lebanon would have to take into account another interest — that of Hezbollah.

Israeli army officials have noted that the pro-Shi'ite organization has become increasingly daring in its efforts to oust Israeli troops from the 9-mile-wide security zone Israel maintains in southern Lebanon to defend its northern border.

According to another assessment, the attacks that Hezbollah launched last week on northern Israel were intended as a "collective" response to previous blows it sustained in clashes with Israel and its ally in the region, the South Lebanon Army.

Defense sources also said that given the previously restrained responses of the Israel Defense Force to Katyusha attacks, Hezbollah may not have expected last week's forceful retaliation by the Israeli military.

Israeli officials said the response was intended to send a message that Israel would not tolerate such attacks.

"We did not go to this with enthusiasm or happiness to damage the Lebanese infrastructure.

"We conveyed messages before we acted, and when we saw they were not received, and our patience ran out, we acted," Defense Minister Moshe Arens said.

Echoing the often repeated accusation of Israeli officials, Arens said Syria is using Hezbollah to pressure Israel.

"There is no doubt that nothing happens in Lebanon unless the Syrians want it," Arens told reporters.

Meanwhile, residents of northern Israel are demanding financial compensation after the fundamentalist Islamic group launched a series of Katyusha rocket attacks on their communities.

A delegation of local leaders from communities along the northern border met Sunday with outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss whether promised aid would be forthcoming.

They also met with Barak, who promised to make the economic needs of the northern communities a top priority in his new government.

In Kiryat Shmona and other communities, residents blocked roads and called a strike to protest what they viewed as government neglect.

Some 500 structures and 100 vehicles were damaged in last week's attacks.

Property damage was estimated at millions of dollars — excluding related economic losses, such as the negative impact on local tourism. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD

Ex-Kindertransport refugees meet for a last full-scale reunion*By Douglas Davis*

LONDON (JTA) — Between 1938 and 1940, some 10,000 children from Germany, Austria and Poland were plucked from the imminent threat of the Nazi inferno and brought to safety in Britain.

Earlier this month, with age increasingly taking its toll, survivors of the Kindertransport, or children's transport, converged on London from all over the world for what is likely to be their last full-scale reunion.

They came from Britain, the United States, Canada and Israel. They also came from Australia and New Zealand.

One delegate, originally from Berlin, traveled to the event from Nepal, where he lives alone, self-sufficient with his own generator, in the mountains outside Katmandu.

The gathering, says Munich-born organizer Bertha Leverton, now of London, exceeded everyone's expectations. "It was absolutely overwhelming.

"There will never be another gathering like this — this is it," she says.

"We are dying out, and I don't want this to just peter out. I want to go out on a high."

Ten years ago, Leverton, now 75, founded the London-based Reunion of Kindertransport, which is dedicated to keeping the former "kinder" in touch with each other through a regular newsletter. Fifty years after the war began, Leverton says she realized that most of the survivors of the Kindertransport had never spoken about their experiences.

Their children might have known they were from Germany, Poland or Austria, she says, but they knew little of the ordeal their parents had endured.

She decided to remedy that by organizing the first Kindertransport reunion, an event that not only captured the imagination of the "kinder" but also the attention of the international media.

The idea of an association was picked up by "kinder" survivors in the United States, who established the Kindertransport Association in New York. It now has chapters throughout the country.

Leverton arrived in Britain in January 1939 at the age of 15, leaving behind her parents and a sister. "I prayed every night that they would be able to come."

Her prayers were answered. Fate and circumstance combined to allow her parents to flee Germany in 1940 and slowly make their way to Britain.

Leverton's reunion with her parents was, tragically for the children of the Kindertransport, desperately rare. The overwhelming majority of other children's prayers were not answered.

Most of the young refugees continued to receive mail from their parents for a few months after they arrived in Britain but then, inexplicably, the letters from home stopped, and they were left to guess why.

"I lost my childhood," Leverton says. "We all lost our childhoods. We all knew what was going on." Curiously, she recalls, "most of them did not break down during the war.

"They broke down afterward — when they saw the pictures of

the concentration camps, when they knew for certain that their parents would never be coming for them, when they learned in what gruesome circumstances they had become orphans."

Leverton recoils when asked about what she calls the "dreadful" family to which she was assigned when she arrived, bewildered, in her new country.

"They were paid for having me," she says. "I not only worked for them but also went out to work, and I had to hand over my wage packet to them each week."

Like many of the "kinder," she was assigned to a non-Jewish family, but while she emerged with her Judaism intact, many others — younger than her and influenced by their adoptive families — did not.

"Quite a few became Christians," she says. "They came as little children and needed something to believe in.

"You take children [aged] 5, 6, 7, and it gives them roots. This is what happens.

"Those that came to the reunion showed an interest in Judaism. They know they are still Jews and they want their children to know.

"There is still something in the soul."

Leverton blames the British Jewish community for the placements into non-Jewish homes.

Many British Jews, she says, were simply unwilling to take in the refugee children.

"Anglo Jewry didn't open their arms to us," she recalls. "We didn't look like refugees. Many of us arrived in our finest clothes and some people resented that. They wanted refugees to look like refugees."

The problem was compounded by the insensitivity of the refugee committees — composed of Jews — who "did not pay much attention to whether Jewish children went to Jewish homes."

But, she hastens to add, there were exceptions. One wealthy couple bought a home in London that could accommodate 13 of the "kinder." And 51 boys were billeted together in a mining village in the north of England. "Of the 51," she says proudly, "only one was lost to Yiddishkeit."

Today, the "kinder" form a large and intensely close international family, largely as a result of Leverton's newsletter.

And she is clearly a proud member of her extraordinary, extended family.

"The refugees mainly mix with each other and marry each other," she says.

"I suppose the major characteristic of the 'kinder' is unity. Unity binds us all together. It all happened a long time ago, but you can never forget something like that."

At the three-day gathering this month, the "kinder" attended conferences, seminars and workshops.

There were formal dinners and country hikes. One of the highlights was the unveiling of a plaque in the British Parliament that expresses the gratitude of the "kinder" to the British government for saving them.

But for Leverton, the lasting memory will be a book for the "kinder" that will be as exclusive as the group itself.

Available only to the "kinder" families, it will contain archival material, stories and articles by them, as well as their names, addresses and telephone numbers.

The book, like so many other of Leverton's endeavors, will be a strictly family affair. □