



# Daily News Bulletin

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83rd Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Geneva summit ends in failure

President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad failed to reach a basis for resuming Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

"The differences that remain" between Israel and Syria are "significant," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said after the Clinton-Assad summit in Geneva. [Page 3]

### Putin urged to repudiate ad

Russian and American Jewish leaders are calling on Russia's acting president, Vladimir Putin, to repudiate a television advertisement that ran in the final days of the presidential campaign claiming a contender is controlled by Jews, foreigners and gays.

With nearly 40 percent of the vote counted in Sunday's election, Putin had received 49.5 percent of the vote. It was unclear whether he would clear the 50 percent barrier needed to win in the first round.

Pinchas Goldschmidt, Moscow's chief rabbi, called the attack on Grigory Yavlinsky "an act of state anti-Semitism" and said that if "Putin doesn't want to be accused of anti-Semitism, he should publicly repudiate these acts."

The Washington-based NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia said in a statement that the ad "perpetrated the worst stereotypes against Russian Jews."

The ad ran on the ORT network, owned by Putin supporter Boris Berezovsky.

Putin's nearest rival, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, had captured almost 31 percent of the vote in the preliminary tally, more than had been predicted.

Yavlinsky had garnered 5.6 percent of the vote.

But his percentage was expected to increase after the vote in Russia's largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, was counted.

### Jewish papers duped by Jesus ad

Eighty American Jewish newspapers recently unwittingly ran an advertisement for a Christian missionary film about a rabbi who finds Jesus.

The advertisement, placed by a Jewish firm unaware of the film's content or producers, shows a bearded man praying at the Western Wall and touts the film as "the unforgettable story of an Israeli rabbi and his struggles in modern society."

## Agencies worry about changes in funding for global Jewish needs

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — As Jewish federation leaders around North America craft a new process for funding overseas needs, the two agencies that traditionally receive those funds are worried how they will fare under the new system.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which provides services to needy Jews around the world, has issued a cry of alarm that the new system under consideration would "destabilize" the JDC and weaken its worldwide humanitarian efforts, including its hunger relief project for elderly Jews in the former Soviet Union.

The larger recipient of federation funds, the Jewish Agency for Israel — which rescues refugees and resettles them in Israel — is not talking of crises and destabilization, but has launched an aggressive public relations campaign among federation leaders to tout the importance of its work.

The JDC's skittishness and the Jewish Agency's public relations efforts come as the federations' umbrella organization, the newly formed United Jewish Communities, struggles with the final stages of its merger from the United Jewish Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations. A key reason for the merger — and a sticking point in hammering out the final details — was the federations' desire to have greater control over how overseas funds — which this year totaled almost \$300 million — are spent.

Federation leaders from around the country will be meeting in early April for an "owners' retreat" to decide on various governing policies for the new entity.

Originally they were also slated to decide on the most contentious issue: whether federations share a collective responsibility to fund overseas needs, and if so, how that should be enforced. But that decision has now been postponed indefinitely, in part because it is so divisive.

Whatever the outcome of the current process, the way funds raised by American Jews are distributed to help Jews in Israel and around the world will look very different.

Until the merger, which became official in November, federations set aside a percentage of their annual campaign revenues and sent it to the UJA, with the bulk of the funds ending up with the Jewish Agency and the JDC.

But in recent years, allocations flowing from federations through the overseas channel have dropped and federations have expressed a desire to have greater control over how overseas funds are spent. Some are also directly funding other groups, such as the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel and the New Israel Fund.

Local Jewish communities have sharply different views on what sorts of overseas programs American Jews should fund, the extent to which federations have "collective responsibility" for funding them and, if there is collective responsibility, whether the UJC should penalize federations that do not contribute an agreed-upon minimum for overseas needs.

Now a committee composed of representatives from 18 federations, the JDC and the Jewish Agency is charged with prioritizing overseas needs and determining which programs should be "core" — those the federations collectively fund — and which should be "elective," projects individual federations will opt to fund.

Leaders of the Overseas Needs Assessment and Distribution Committee, known as ONAD, say no recommendation decisions have yet been made and they stress they do not wish to destabilize either the JDC or the Jewish Agency. But concerns about the way the process was moving prompted the JDC to submit a resolution to ONAD urging it to provide the same base allocation for the next two years — \$58.6 million and \$4.7

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Interfaith meeting fares poorly

Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Palestinian Sheik Taysir Tamimi each claimed Jerusalem as their people's eternal capital at the only three-faith gathering during Pope John Paul II's pilgrimage in Israel.

The pope held his head in his hands during the speeches last week. The sheik left before the ceremony ended.

### Paper urges Syrian withdrawal

A Beirut newspaper demanded that Syria create a timetable for withdrawing its 35,000 troops from Lebanon. The front-page article in *An-Nahar*, described by Arab sources as "unprecedented" and "audacious," was published on the eve of President Clinton's meeting in Geneva on Sunday with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

### Coptic head doesn't want visa

The spiritual leader of Egypt's 3 million Orthodox Coptic Christians said he will never visit Jerusalem as long as it remains under Israeli occupation.

"I simply can't bring myself to ask the Israelis for a visa to visit the Holy City," Pope Shenouda III, whose church has never recognized Vatican authority, told the Arabic weekly *al-Mushahid Assiyasi*.

### 2 charged with helping Hamas

An Israeli Arab was charged with aiding a Hamas cell that planned to carry out a series of terror bombings in Israel.

Officials also arrested a Jewish settler from the Gaza Strip on suspicion of accepting money to transport the cell members from Gaza to Israel.

The settler has stated that he thought the members were illegal Palestinian workers.

An Israeli anti-terror squad killed four Hamas members and captured another member of the cell during a shootout earlier this month.



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million of hunger relief funding — as it received in 1999.

JDC board members drafted the resolution after learning that "federation members on the Committee are considering a freeze" at the 1998 level of basic funding of \$57.3 million for JDC and "discontinuing the Hunger Relief Allocation," which that year totaled \$7.2 million, according to a JDC board report obtained by JTA.

The hunger relief allocation was created a few years ago to feed elderly Jews in the former Soviet Union. But many in the federation system have been pressing for the agency to integrate the hunger relief into its regular budget, possibly cutting other programs to free up the money. JDC's executive vice president, Michael Schneider, was hesitant about discussing his concerns with JTA, saying the matter was "still in committee" and "we're not mounting the ramparts yet."

Alan Jaffe of New York, the chairman of the ONAD committee, described the JDC's concerns as "premature."

"There have been a lot of things discussed," he said. "We're trying to deal with federations' desire for change while at the same time trying not to destabilize major service providers."

One of the key architects of the ONAD process, committee member Robert Aronson, compared the JDC's anxiety to that of local agencies in his community who "if they think their budget's being cut, they'll fight to retain it."

However, Aronson, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, said that instead of leading to budget cuts for the JDC, ONAD — by giving communities more say over and thus a greater feeling of connection to international projects — is "an opportunity to stop the bleeding in the allocations."

The Jewish Agency, at least publicly, is expressing confidence that the support it's "received in the past from the Jews of the world will continue," said Michael Jankelowitz, a spokesman for the agency.

But the agency has been engaged in a direct public relations effort to individual federations to publicize its activities.

It has launched a weekly e-mail report to promote the agency's work and been going on the road from federation to federation to boost support for its role. □

## Rededicated Kiev synagogue to serve as community center

By Lev Gorodetsky

KIEV, Ukraine (JTA) — Ukrainian Jews have rededicated one of the largest synagogues in Eastern Europe.

Some 600 people, including high-ranking Ukrainian officials, gathered March 22 at the Great Synagogue, called by many the Brodsky Synagogue, to celebrate its reopening.

"It symbolizes the democratic changes in Ukraine and a new stage in the life of Ukrainian Jewry as a whole," said Lubavitch Rabbi Moshe-Reuven Azman, who heads the synagogue.

The synagogue, built in 1898 by sugar industry tycoon and Jewish leader Lazar Brodsky, served as the focal point of the city's varied Jewish activities.

In 1926, however, the Soviet authorities closed it down. Since then, the building has housed several institutions, including a puppet theater.

In 1992 Chabad-Lubavitch groups, which are dominant in Kiev's Jewish religious life, began struggling for the building's return. They got their wish in 1997, when Ukrainian authorities — Jewish activists in Kiev stress the personal involvement of President Leonid Kuchma in this move — handed it over to the Jewish community.

Shortly thereafter, Vadim Rabinovitch, a Ukrainian Jewish tycoon and the leader of the umbrella United Jewish Community of Ukraine, contributed \$100,000 to the restoration of the synagogue. Azman is going to turn back the clock by using the synagogue as a community center for the city's roughly 100,000 Jews.

The synagogue will house a Sunday school for children, clubs and camps for young people, a library, Hebrew, Yiddish and Judaic classes for adults, help to the Jewish elderly and classes for the deaf. □

## JEWISH WORLD

### Nazi doctor may indeed face trial

A retired Austrian neurologist whose trial in Vienna for alleged Nazi war crimes was adjourned indefinitely may have celebrated too soon. Judge Karlheinz Seewald stopped the trial just 20 minutes after it started last week after a psychiatrist testified that Heinrich Gross is suffering from dementia.

But Seewald is now believed to be having second thoughts after Gross told a television interviewer that the state did not have enough evidence to try him for complicity in the murder of nine children at a Vienna clinic during World War II.

### Albright urged to press Egypt

Some U.S. lawmakers are objecting to recent anti-Israel remarks in Egyptian state-sponsored newspapers and say Egypt has a "special responsibility" to condemn anti-Semitism. Nineteen members of Congress sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright urging her to press Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to denounce the commentaries.

Meanwhile, American Jewish groups met last Friday with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa.

They discussed Egypt's role in the peace process and anti-Semitism in the Egyptian media.

### British Jews told to alter image

A London-based Jewish think tank is calling on British Jews not to look at themselves in strictly religious terms, but as a people tied together culturally, historically and socially.

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research also called for the creation of a development program aimed at educating women, younger Jews and the unaffiliated in how to become leaders of the community.

### Report: Eichmann files found

German officials reportedly found thousands of files from the Vienna office of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann dating back to 1938. Eichmann followed Hitler's army into Austria that year and launched an anti-Semitic campaign.

His files are expected to fuel the ongoing debate in Austria over compensating Holocaust victims for their loss of property, according to the German news magazine Der Spiegel.

### Haman awards prompt apology

B'nai B'rith International apologized for the "unauthorized" announcement of humorous awards the group gave out last week as part of a Purim jest.

The awards were given to first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Texas Gov. George W. Bush, among others.

## Clinton-Assad summit fails, no new peace talks scheduled

By Mitchell Danow

NEW YORK (JTA) — It does not appear that Israeli-Syrian negotiations will resume any time soon.

During a summit that lasted some four hours Sunday in Geneva, President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad failed to reach a basis for resuming the negotiations.

"The differences that remain" between Israel and Syria are "significant," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said after the summit.

The meeting has been widely viewed as the last chance to revive the negotiations during Clinton's remaining time in office.

Lockhart characterized the summit as "very useful." But, he said, "We don't believe it would be productive" for Israeli-Syrian talks to resume at this point.

"Obviously more work needs to be done" to bridge the gaps between the two sides, Lockhart said.

"It is impossible to predict when those talks might resume," he said.

Clinton spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak twice during Sunday's talks, Lockhart said.

Clinton and Assad talked for more than two hours, took a two-hour break and then resumed their meeting, he said. During the break, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met separately with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, who was part of the Syrian delegation.

The summit broke down over the question of how much of the Golan Heights Israel would return to Syria as part of a peace treaty, according to a Syrian presidential spokesman.

In a statement Sunday, the spokesman referred to "the obstacles which Israel put and is still putting in front of the resumption of talks," adding that Assad remains firm in his demand for a "full Israeli withdrawal" to the border that existed before the 1967 Six-Day War.

Clinton had proposed that Israel withdraw to a redrawn line close to the prewar boundary, with Syria renouncing its right to water from the Sea of Galilee, diplomatic sources told Reuters.

The United States also wanted an assurance from Assad that Syria would work to prevent attacks on Israeli troops in southern Lebanon if negotiations were to resume, the sources said.

Israeli Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami told Reuters that Israel expected to retain complete control of the Sea of Galilee, the source of 40 percent of its water, in any deal with Damascus.

While Barak has made it clear he is willing to make "painful concessions" on the Golan if security arrangements and other conditions are met, Israeli leaders have repeatedly insisted they would not agree to grant the Syrians control over the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Prior to the summit, U.S. and Israeli officials downplayed expectations that it would lead to a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations. Those talks were suspended in January amid Syrian demands that Israel commit itself to a full withdrawal from the Golan. Barak told his Cabinet the chances of getting the negotiations with Syria back on track were no better than 50 percent.

In the two months since the talks were suspended, reports in the Israeli media ranged from talk of unbridgeable gaps to stories about behind-the-scenes contacts in which most all of the details of a final peace Israeli-Syrian peace treaty were worked out.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials are reportedly preparing for a withdrawal from southern Lebanon by July.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz, contradicting last week's media reports, said Barak has not ruled out the army's proposal for leaving intact a number of military outposts just north of the border with Lebanon. □

(JTA correspondent Naomi Segal in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

## Pope places note at Western Wall, and he makes the sign of the cross

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Pope John Paul II prayed at Judaism's holiest site as he wrapped up a weeklong pilgrimage to the Holy Land devoted to religious reconciliation.

Visiting the Western Wall on Sunday, the pope rested his hands against the stones and prayed.

Reflecting a Jewish tradition, he placed at the wall a note expressing sorrow over Jewish suffering at Christian hands over the centuries. After placing it there, he made the sign of the cross.

"We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and, asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the People of the Covenant," said the pope's typed, signed note.

Israeli Cabinet minister Michael Melchior, who welcomed the pope at the Western Wall, said his visit there reflected the Roman Catholic Church's desire to end the era of "hatred, humiliation and persecution of the Jewish people."

After the pope left the site, Israeli officials transferred his signed note to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial for permanent display.

Asked about the pope's making the sign of the cross at the Wall, Melchior said Jews have a "psychological problem" with the cross. But, he added, "I think that what's important here is not the cross. It's that he touched the wall and the wall touched him."

Bearing the message of the shared holiness of Jerusalem, the pope spent the last day of his pilgrimage visiting sites holy to Judaism, Islam and Christianity in the ancient walled city.

Before visiting the Western Wall, the 79-year-old pope arrived at the Al-Aksa Mosque complex, where he was greeted by the mufti of Jerusalem and other Palestinian officials.

Schoolchildren welcomed him with cheers of "Long Live Palestine" while hundreds of balloons in the green, red and black colors of the Palestinian flag were released.

During his meeting with the pope, Grand Mufti Ikrima Sabri urged him to "stand by justice in order to end the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem."

A day earlier, the mufti, who is the leading Islamic cleric in Jerusalem, accused Israel of exaggerating the scale of the Holocaust to win international support.

"Six million? It was a lot less," Sabri told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* on Saturday. "It's not my fault if Hitler hated the Jews. Anyway they hate them just about everywhere."

From the Western Wall Plaza, the pope continued to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.

Calling the site the "most hallowed place on earth," the pope recited the final Mass of his visit. Alongside him were clerics from the different, sometimes squabbling, sects that are represented at the shrine.

Security was tight during the pope's tour of the Old City out of concern for disruptions by Arabs or Jews opposed to his presence. No major incidents were reported.

As the day waned, the pope traveled to Ben-Gurion Airport, where Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, joined by Israeli and

church officials, saw him off for his return flight to the Vatican.

After climbing the stairs to his plane, the pope stopped to salute the crowd, clasped his hands in blessing and looked skyward. Before entering the plane, he turned and offered one final wave of farewell. □

## Poland apologizes to Jewish hero after swastika mars clean-up effort

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Poland's president and prime minister have sent letters of support and apology to a Jewish World War II hero after vandals scrawled anti-Semitic slogans on the walls of his home in the city of Lodz.

The vandalism at the home of Marek Edelman, the last surviving commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, occurred last week, after thousands of volunteers in Lodz cleaned up city walls long defaced by racist and anti-Semitic graffiti.

Vandals painted on Edelman's building a swastika, the name of a skinhead group and the phrase "Jude raus," German for "Jew, out."

"Young people from Lodz reacted so magnificently to slogans of hatred and stupidity. And then, under the cover of night someone tried to prove that evil must prevail," Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek wrote Edelman.

"But democracy cannot tolerate evil," Buzek wrote. "I can therefore assure you that that ignoble act will be met with the decisive reaction of the state. The hatred directed against you is hatred directed at every Pole, myself included."

President Aleksander Kwasniewski sent a similar message to Edelman, a cardiologist and longtime human rights activist who has received many honors from the Polish state.

The Polish media also expressed indignation.

"Someone spat in our face," headlined the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which had helped organize the clean-up campaign, called "Action Colorful Tolerance."

Jews and others expressed satisfaction with the campaign.

Despite the act of vandalism, the "clean-up action is seen as a truly positive development," said Stanislaw Krajewski, a member of the board of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland. "The only reservation would be that it came so late. Still, a good beginning has been made. All serious political forces support it."

The clean-up action involved thousands of volunteers, including city authorities, the Union of Jewish Students and the Catholic Youth Association.

Lodz has become infamous in recent years for anti-Semitic graffiti, much of it scrawled by local soccer fans and directed not against Jews per se, but against opposing teams.

As in other countries — such as Italy — fanatic soccer fans, often linked to skinhead groups, frequently use anti-Semitic slogans and imagery to denigrate opponents.

In Lodz, for example, graffiti all over the city showed a Star of David hanging from the gallows captioned "LKS Jude" — Jude means Jew in German, and LKS is the name of a soccer team.

The clean-up action was sponsored by the local office of *Gazeta Wyborcza* in response to an open letter from the chairman of a Lodz Jewish group, Abraham Zelig, complaining that the graffiti desecrated the memory of Nazi victims. □