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TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian rabbi retracts claim

Russia's chief rabbi conceded that his charge that the government of President Vladimir Putin was attempting to oust him was "a misunderstanding."

Addressing the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in New York, Adolph Shayeveich said no Kremlin official had directly instructed him to resign, but that he had construed several recent events as pressure to step down.

Shayeveich noted, however, that Russian Jewry was being dragged into the rivalries of leading public figures, some of them Jewish.

Albright arrives in Middle East

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in the Middle East for discussions aimed at advancing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

During her stay in the region, Albright is scheduled to meet with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa in Cairo to discuss the suspended Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Four sentenced in bridge collapse

An Israeli court sentenced four of five defendants to jail time of up to 21 months for their role in a bridge collapse at the 1997 Maccabiah Games.

The defendants had already been found guilty of negligence in connection with the collapse, which left four Australian athletes dead and scores of others injured. The father of one of the Australian athletes injured in the tragedy called the sentences too lenient.

Hillary leads among N.Y. Jews

Hillary Rodham Clinton would receive 49 percent of the Jewish vote in New York's Senate race if the election were held now, according to a new poll.

Rep. Rick Lazio received 31 percent of the vote in the New York Daily News/New York 1 poll.

Overall, Clinton led Lazio by 46 to 42 percent in the survey of 1,001 voters, conducted last week.

Russia handed hostage names

Israel presented Russian authorities with the names of eight Jews believed to have been kidnapped by Chechen gangs, Interior Minister Natan Sharansky said. The remarks followed the return to Israel on Sunday of Adi Sharon, a 12-year-old boy held for 10 months before a Russian anti-terror unit rescued him.

UJC's \$41.7 million budget tries to balance many needs

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — It's hard to develop a budget when you don't know exactly what you'll be doing with the money.

But without a budget, it's impossible to do anything.

That's the Catch-22 the new national umbrella organization for Jewish federations — the product of the merger between the United Jewish Appeal and the Council of Jewish Federations — faces as it struggles to get off the ground.

Last year's creation of the United Jewish Communities was spurred by a desire by federations to get services delivered more efficiently and to have a greater say in national decision-making. Now, many in the system are viewing the UJC's newly unveiled \$41.7 million budget proposal for operating expenses as a first indicator of just how successful the new entity will be at balancing the larger federations' desires for reduced costs with the smaller federations' anxiety about losing services.

The proposed budget, which will be voted on by the UJC's Board of Trustees and Board of Delegates on June 15 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, represents a \$4.4 million cut from what the UJC's predecessor organizations were spending before the merger. It trims slightly under \$1 million from what the UJC itself spent in the 1999-2000 fiscal year, cutting some departments heavily while substantially increasing resources for others.

Among the largest proposed changes from this year's budget:

- **Regional offices** would be allocated \$5.4 million, a 19 percent cut from this year's \$6.7 million. These offices assist federations with fund-raising and personnel issues. The savings would result primarily from cutting a variety of programs and eliminating 15 — or nearly one-quarter — of regional staff positions, but details as to which regions and positions will be affected will not be disclosed until after the budget is approved.

At the same time, what is being termed "management services" to the federations — not part of the regional budget, but part of a new plan to revamp services — would increase by \$300,000.

- **Campaign/Financial Resource Development**, the major fund-raising part of the UJC, would be cut by \$1.6 million, or approximately 14 percent. The largest cuts would be to eliminate a \$500,000 direct marketing center — which assists with telemarketing and direct mail solicitations — and to cut subsidies for missions, a way of enticing donors on fund-raising trips, by 10 percent.

In total, however, missions' subsidies would be cut by only 6 percent, because subsidies falling under the Israel/Overseas Department would actually increase somewhat.

- **The Community Planning Department** budget would more than double in size, from \$415,902 to \$1.1 million. The department involves among other things, strategic planning and research, including oversight of the upcoming National Jewish Population Survey.

- **The Israel/Overseas Department** would be cut from \$8.35 million to just under \$8 million. Certain programs within the department would get additional funds, but the United Israel Appeal would be cut by \$495,000, or 28 percent; and \$117,000, or 25 percent, would be cut from the Partnership 2000 program, which links American Jewish communities to Israeli communities for people-to-people exchanges, economic development and services to new immigrants. As revealing as the immediate cuts and

MIDEAST FOCUS

U.N.: Lebanon border completed

U.N. officials finished defining the border between Israel and Lebanon, according to U.N. envoy Terje Roed Larsen. He said this will enable the United Nations to confirm that Israeli troops had fully withdrawn from Lebanon and pave the way for the world body to send peacekeepers to the region.

Hezbollah marches in Beirut

Hezbollah gunmen paraded through the streets of Beirut on Tuesday, displaying military equipment captured during last month's Israeli troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

The gunmen stood atop tanks, armored troop carriers and jeeps while thousands of Lebanese lining the streets cheered and threw flowers.

Abdullah upbeat on Syrian peace

There is a "tremendous window of opportunity" on the Israeli-Syrian peace front, Jordan's King Abdullah told Newsweek.

"My impression from Syria is the door from their side is still very open," Abdullah said, adding that the March summit in Geneva between President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad broke down because of a "misunderstanding of each other's position."

Germany to accept SLA refugees

Germany agreed to accept asylum to 400 South Lebanon Army refugees who fled to Israel.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer confirmed the decision following talks in Jerusalem with his Israeli counterpart, David Levy.

Israeli police hurt in clashes

Seven Israeli police officers were slightly hurt in clashes with Palestinians trying to prevent the demolition of an illegally built house in the Arab village of Walajah outside Jerusalem.

Six Palestinian youths were slightly hurt.



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increases are the suggestions for future plans laid out in the budget. For example, a committee is exploring how to further reduce costs in infrastructure and subsidies for missions.

In addition, it is still unclear how much new programs — such as the newly formed pillars, four areas on which the UJC is concentrating its focus — will cost.

The budget covers all operating expenses and services provided to its member federations, but does not include the funds distributed overseas to the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. That total was almost \$300 million in 1999 — and is expected to be roughly the same as last year.

The UJC's revenues come from a combination of membership dues from the federations and 11 percent taken off the top from federations' overseas allocations, a holdover from the revenue system of the UJA. In the next two years, the UJC will be replacing this with a streamlined dues system.

Federation leaders say they expect the budget proposal will be approved at the June meeting in Chicago by the two UJC voting bodies. The Board of Trustees and the Board of Delegates are dominated by federation representatives, with larger federations getting proportionally more representation than smaller ones.

But some leaders say the cuts are not dramatic enough, considering that the merger of two organizations was expected to lead to greater efficiency.

"Many, many federations want to see the UJC budget smaller," said Robert Aronson, executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, where there are 90,000 Jews.

Aronson said he would have liked to see the budget go below \$40 million, but still supports the proposal, viewing this year as a first step, with further cuts to come in the next few years.

Meanwhile, smaller federations are worried that their ability to raise funds will be hindered by the UJC's proposed cuts to regional offices, which offer small and intermediate-sized communities consultation on fund raising, recruiting personnel, marketing and other issues.

At an April meeting of the federations, the UJC's chief executive officer, Louise Stoll, insisted that cuts in regional offices would not mean a cut in the quality of services, and that they would simply be provided more efficiently. She outlined a "hub" system in which large federations would help their neighboring federations and a national team of consultants would be available to help small federations.

However, details are still somewhat sketchy — a more specific plan is to be unveiled later this month — and leaders of the smaller federations are skeptical.

Eric Stillman, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, said, "Unknown and unproven services are being proposed and because there are no models in existence demonstrating how such a hub system or national team of experts would be implemented, it's very hard for an individual federation to have a sense of comfort that the loss of regional services would be replaced and improved upon."

Small federations also worry that with reduced subsidies for missions, they will not be able to muster enough interest in the trips, which federation leaders say increase donors' campaign contributions in the long run.

Those cuts are expected to affect small communities more than large ones, because UJC leaders have said they will scale back sponsorship of smaller missions, which are less cost-effective than larger ones.

Marvin Goldberg, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, in North Carolina, where there are 8,000 Jews, said cuts to regions could lead to a "national agency that's isolated from its owners." adding that "decentralizing services is a better way to get services quickly and responsively," he said.

But leaders from both small and large federations say that given the UJC's newness, it is simply too early to make any final judgments.

"I think it's a transition budget, developed as we're trying to identify what the organization is going to look like," said Lawrence Fine, executive director of the Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, N.Y.

In the next few years, "the budget process will have a reality it can be matched to," he said. "Now it's hard to tell whether the cuts in various areas are the right cuts or wrong cuts because the organization is still so new." □

JEWISH WORLD

U.S. citizens sue Arafat

Two American citizens filed a lawsuit against Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for their suffering during the 1985 hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro.

Sophie Chasser, 84, of Hollywood, Fla., and Ann Schneider, 87, of Great Neck, N.Y., are asking for \$5 million in damages from Arafat and Mohammed Abu Abbas, the mastermind of the hijacking.

Czech police seize 'Mein Kampf'

Czech police seized 300 copies of "Mein Kampf" as it continued its crackdown on the new publication of Hitler's manifesto.

Officials said they would soon confiscate other unsold copies of the Czech translation of the book, which was published in March without disclaimers or commentaries.

Dutch to pay for looted assets

Dutch banks and the Amsterdam stock exchange agreed to pay compensation for assets looted from Holocaust victims during World War II, according to a Jewish group.

The Central Jewish Board of the Netherlands said the exact amount of money still needs to be determined.

"We consider this a step forward," group spokesman Ronnie Naftaniel told Reuters. "They accept that they have created damage to the Jewish community, that they feel responsibility for this damage and they want to pay."

Johannesburg homes defaced

Twelve houses in a predominantly Jewish suburb of Johannesburg were spray-painted with swastikas and other Nazi symbols. The homes of non-Jewish residents in the area were also targeted.

Russell Gaddin, national chairman of the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies, believes the graffiti was the work of youthful pranksters.

Hebrew teachers to get master's

Brandeis University is offering a master's program in Hebrew language education. The program, which starts this fall, will train students to teach Hebrew at the elementary, secondary, post-secondary and adult-education levels.

Yiddish anthology published

The first volume of an anthology of American Yiddish literature in Yiddish was recently published. "Yiddish Literature in America, 1870-2000" includes a wide variety of works, including novels, poetry, short stories and essays.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Everybody knows 'non-negotiable' Jerusalem is now being negotiated

By David Landau

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Commemorations marking Jerusalem Day went off as they usually do each year.

Israeli politicians made their solemn declarations on Sunday that the city will remain forever united under Israeli rule; young Jews, most of them Orthodox, marched through the city; Israeli police broke up altercations with Palestinian residents of the city, who felt no less than the marchers that the city belongs to them.

But while all seemed the same, a great deal was different when Jerusalem Day was marked last week.

Because this year, for the first time since the eastern portion of the city was liberated in 1967 by the Israeli army, the city's future is on the negotiating table.

By all accounts, the negotiators — Israeli Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami and Ahmed Karia, the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council — have made little progress on the issue of Jerusalem.

On Monday, in fact, Karia cited Jerusalem as one of the areas on which the parties are still far apart.

But the fact that they are publicly acknowledging that negotiations are under way — on one of the issues they have previously characterized as non-negotiable — is itself a major development.

Ordinary people are now confronting tangible evidence that the rhetoric of politicians on both sides — who use words like "eternal," "exclusive" and "capital" — can harbor several levels of meaning.

On the Israeli side, people marking Jerusalem Day did so under as Israeli media reported that proposals are on the table calling for a Palestinian flag to fly over the Al-Aksa Mosque on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, and for the Palestinians to have municipal self-rule in portions of the city.

Israelis may not all agree with such proposals. But they can no longer delude themselves that the rhetoric of their political leaders truly reflects the diplomatic reality.

Similarly on the Palestinian side, people protesting on Jerusalem Day under banners calling for all of pre-1967 eastern Jerusalem to be the capital of a Palestinian state can hardly ignore the welter of media reports that Palestinian negotiators do in fact distinguish between Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the vast Jewish suburbs that have been built around Jerusalem since 1967.

Realistically, those suburbs are not part of the negotiations; they are to remain Israeli. Regarding the West Bank settlements, on the other hand, the government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak is clearly prepared to relinquish dozens of them in the context of a final peace accord.

Granted, there is no certainty that Israel and the Palestinians are on the verge of concluding such an agreement.

Some Israeli policy-makers predict that the issues of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees will prove too intractable and that they will be suspended for several years to come — while all other matters, including borders, settlements and Palestinian sovereignty, are settled in the present talks.

Whatever the outcome of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to the region this week — or of the three-way summit that President Clinton hopes to hold by month's end — Jerusalem is firmly on the table. □

N.C. museum to buy back looted art

NEW YORK (JTA) — After returning a painting stolen by the Nazis to its rightful Jewish owners, the North Carolina Museum of Art will soon buy the painting back.

The painting's heirs said they will sell the painting for \$600,000 to show their appreciation for the museum's sense of justice. "Madonna and Child in a Landscape," painted by Lucas Cranach in 1518, has been valued as high as \$1.2 million. □

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD**Restored makeshift synagogue draws thousands to Czech site***By Magnus Bennett*

PRAGUE (JTA) — The fading Hebrew inscriptions that adorn the walls of a small storeroom in the town of Terezin can be seen in virtually any synagogue around the globe.

But thousands of Jews have been flocking to the recently discovered room because of its unique role in history — as a makeshift synagogue during the Czech ghetto's darkest days.

What makes the place of worship even more special is that it is the only remaining example of its kind at the wartime transit camp, also known by its German name of Theresienstadt, in which more than 30,000 Jews died.

The historical significance of the 20-square-yard prayer room is evident to those who have entered it via a courtyard tucked behind an ordinary terraced house in the center of the town.

"It is unbelievably valuable," said the Czech Republic's chief rabbi, Karol Sidon. "It shows the ghetto from a different side than usual. When I saw the room for the first time it was extremely moving because it shows that people were able to believe there, even in the ghetto during the war."

The walls of the room, which stands near the original railway track used to transport Jews to Auschwitz, feature a selection of Hebrew liturgical inscriptions along with drawings of Jewish symbols. On the front wall is a verse from the Amidah, the core of Jewish daily prayer services, "May our eyes be able to envision your return to Zion in mercy."

The words were almost certainly written by a German Jewish ceramic worker, one of a number of craftsmen living in the neighborhood during the ghetto's existence between 1941 and 1945. Local experts believe the craftsmen, who were permitted to live in relative comfort because the Nazis needed their skills, used the storeroom as a temporary synagogue.

According to Vojtech Blodig, the Terezin Ghetto Museum's deputy director of education, the Nazis may well have been aware of the synagogue.

"The Germans' philosophy was very simple," Blodig said. "Let the Jews pray, let them play theater and perform concerts in the ghetto because they will all die later."

Although several similar places of prayer were scattered across the town during the war, this is the only example that survives.

"This room was preserved because for years it was in a terrible mess. It was used as a storage area for boxes and hay," Blodig said.

"Other rooms in attics or garages were used as synagogues but they were destroyed and no remnants of original inscriptions and drawings on the walls survived."

The existence of the synagogue only came to light after the fall of communism in 1989, when the granddaughter of the property's original owner finally revealed its story.

"I knew about the synagogue the whole time," said local teacher Hana Cerna, 63.

"But because during communism the Jewish religion was taboo, and no one talked about the ghetto, I didn't tell anyone. The news only broke after the Velvet Revolution," as Czechoslovakia's break from communism is known, "when I told my schoolchildren that I had a synagogue at my home."

The condition of the prayer room had deteriorated badly by the time the Ghetto Museum learned of its existence. After half a century of neglect, inscriptions on the lower half of the walls had perished beyond repair.

The museum reached a deal with Cerna under which they would repair the roof and restore the prayer room in return for regular access. They brought in Prague restorer Dominika Machacova to save what she could of the inscriptions and drawings.

"It was in a very bad state," she said. "It was very humid and rain was coming through the roof."

Machacova spent five months preserving the original paint layers, finishing her work in 1997.

"Its historical value is greater than its artistic value. It is a wonderful discovery," she said.

The prayer room was kept in its original state as much as possible. "I didn't want the room to be repainted," Sidon said. "It is real this way and it would have lost the urgency of reality."

That sense of reality has deeply moved many of the Jews from around the world who have already visited the site. Local guide Jan Netrvál explained that some visitors burst into song or said prayers in the room, while others left letters, candles, flags and flowers.

"It is a great piece of history and some people become very emotional," he said. "Yesterday there were people whose parents died in Terezin. The ones who were here, or whose parents were here, feel very strongly."

American Rabbi Joshua Hammerstein, writing in the New York Jewish Week after a visit to the synagogue, described it as "an oasis of holiness in the midst of hell, never defiled by the Nazis, a place where the condemned could utter ancient prayers and dare to hope."

He continued, "We were in tears. Spontaneously we davened the afternoon service, although very few of us had prayer books. It didn't matter. The prayers were calling out to us from those walls."

Those interested in visiting the site won't find it easily without arranging an official tour because the owner has no plans to advertise the synagogue openly.

"I know that some of today's young people, I mean skinheads, do not like things like that. I wouldn't put a board outside my house saying that I have a synagogue here." □

Polish synagogue restored

ROME (JTA) — The Tempel Synagogue in Krakow, Poland, has been restored to its original splendor.

The city, in partnership with international preservation groups and private donors, carried out the six-year renovation project.

The magnificent building will serve as a sanctuary for religious services and also provide a venue for concerts and other cultural events.

A plaque was unveiled at a ceremony June 1 to honor the international supporters of the project and the team of architects, conservators, historians and craftspeople who collaborated on the painstaking reclamation.

"None of us realized at the beginning what a potent effect this undertaking would have on the community. It shows that it is possible to give abandoned synagogues a viable new life," said Bonnie Burnham, president of the New York-based World Monuments Fund. □