



# Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### Suicide bomber kills doctor

A suicide bomber killed a 53-year-old physician and wounded at least 50 other Israelis when he detonated explosives strapped to his body at a crowded bus stop in a Tel Aviv suburb. The attacker, believed to be a Palestinian, set off the bomb Sunday as a Herzliyah-bound bus stopped to pick up passengers along a busy street in Kfar Saba, police said.

Following several other bombings in recent weeks, Kfar Saba Mayor Yitzhak Wald has demanded that a fence be erected to separate his city from the border with the West Bank.

### Shoah council head reprimanded

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council criticized its chairman for writing a letter asking President Clinton to pardon financier Marc Rich, and dissociated itself from the pardon request.

In a resolution that received unanimous support, the council said it had been a mistake for Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg to write a letter on Rich's behalf, but it also accepted Greenberg's apology and commended Greenberg for his efforts in Holocaust education.

### Report: AMIA blast 'victim' alive

A presumed victim of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Argentina is alive and well in neighboring Paraguay, according to an AMIA spokesperson. [Page 4]

### Hoopsters slam dunk Jews

Jewish groups are protesting a statement by a member of the New York Knicks basketball team in which he said Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus and are persecuting Christians "every day."

Charlie Ward's comments in The New York Times Magazine revive the "historic myths that have been the source of anti-Semitism for centuries," the Anti-Defamation League said in a statement.

Ward later told reporters that if they want to know the context for his statement, they should read the Bible. In the article, teammate Allan Houston was quoted as defending Ward's statement.

A third teammate suggested the Jewish writer join Jews for Jesus. American Jewish Congress Executive Director Phil Baum recommended that Ward and Houston "stick to basketball, and leave the theology to those who know at least something about it."

## FOCUS ON ISSUES

### Youth group in financial limbo as B'nai B'rith cuts some corners

By Julie Wiener

NEW YORK (JTA) — One of American Jewry's oldest — and most financially beleaguered — institutions is expected to slash funding for a program repeatedly described as its "jewel in the crown."

B'nai B'rith, which has seen its membership and financial resources plummet in recent years, may stop subsidizing regional programming of its youth group, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization.

No final decisions will be made until a May 18 board meeting of B'nai B'rith.

With an estimated 20,000 members, BBYO is one of the largest Jewish youth groups in the United States. Its regions currently receive approximately \$2 million from B'nai B'rith.

The anticipated cuts come as B'nai B'rith is decentralizing much of its operations and is expected to significantly cut funding for Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

Hillel, which until the early 1990s was funded almost entirely by B'nai B'rith, expects to receive \$50,000 from B'nai B'rith in the 2002 fiscal year, down from \$300,000 this year.

Gary Saltzman, chairman of B'nai B'rith's national youth commission, sent an e-mail to regional BBYO leaders last month, warning them that they may lose all B'nai B'rith funding by July 1.

The memo "said that we should anticipate no money coming to any of the regions effective July 1 and should plan for it," said Robert Groman, chair of BBYO's Nassau/Suffolk region, in suburban New York.

While Saltzman's memo was not made available to JTA, several sources said it urged regional leaders to explore other sources of funding, such as Jewish federations, foundations and local B'nai B'rith chapters.

BBYO's 39 regions vary considerably in their dependence on B'nai B'rith. Some, like the New Jersey and Long Island ones, have received most of their budgets from the national office.

Others, like the Michigan region, already supplement their B'nai B'rith allocations with money from their local federations.

Some regions also have arrangements whereby they receive office space, staff and in-kind services from local Jewish community centers.

It is possible that the national arm of the federation system and JCCs will step in to help BBYO.

In an April 12 memo to federation leaders and Jewish community centers, the executives of the federation umbrella organization — the United Jewish Communities — and the Jewish Community Centers Association of North America said they anticipate "important consultations regarding the future of BBYO," and are asking federations to implement a moratorium until May 31 on funding decisions concerning BBYO.

"We believe that acting in concert will ultimately be in the best interest of all local communities and the BBYO program," continues the UJC/JCCA memo.

But an arrangement with the JCCs might not sit well with BBYO's grass roots. Last year, for example, top B'nai B'rith officials brokered an agreement for a merger of sorts between BBYO and the JCCA.

However, regional B'nai B'rith and BBYO leaders feared that BBYO's unique

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Official accused of giving secrets

Israeli officials indicted a former Israel Defense Force official, according to Israel Radio.

Details of the indictment filed last week against retired Brig. Gen. Itzhak Ya'acov, 75, were released in Israel after the British Sunday Times newspaper said he had been arrested in Jerusalem.

Israel Radio said Ya'acov, who in recent years had been living in New York, was accused of "passing secret information stemming from his military service to unauthorized authorities, with the intention of harming state security."

The newspaper said Ya'acov helped develop Israel's nuclear weapons program.

But there was no indication whether he was accused of passing nuclear secrets.

### Time: Militants to join forces

Hamas and Hezbollah officials plan to put aside past differences when they meet in Iran this week to discuss coordinating attacks on Israel, according to Time magazine.

### Report: Assad praises Hezbollah

An Israeli minister maintains that U.S. and Israeli officials have a tape of a telephone conversation in which Syrian President Bashar Assad congratulated Hezbollah for abducting three Israeli soldiers last October, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

Israeli security officials were incensed after Saleh Tarif, the first Druse minister in Israel's history, made the disclosure.

In another development, President Bush telephoned Assad in an effort to reduce tensions in the Middle East.

Assad's spokesman said the Syrian president told Bush last Friday that the situation between Israelis and Palestinians has reached a critical stage, that Syria finds Israel completely responsible and that it reserves the right to respond "in the way we see fit."

identity would be subsumed by the JCCs, and that BBYO regions in areas without JCCs would vanish. They forced the proposal off the table.

B'nai B'rith is expected to continue funding BBYO's international office in Washington, including its international director.

However, BBYO has had only an interim director since last summer, when the director resigned. It also has been operating since this summer without a chief financial officer.

Saltzman and several other B'nai B'rith officials declined to comment on the funding situation, emphasizing that the youth group's funding is still under discussion and that nothing will be decided until the organization's May 18 board meeting.

"The expectation is that undoubtedly regions are going to be asked to assume greater responsibility in raising funds, but in terms of the actual numbers and formula, that's something yet to be decided," said Daniel Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith's executive vice president.

Amid the uncertainty about the level of cuts, a feeling of widespread confusion reigns inside B'nai B'rith.

B'nai B'rith officials are complaining privately that Saltzman's memo was sent out without permission or endorsement from the top.

Meanwhile, several high-level BBYO officials and regional chairs are complaining that they feel out of the loop, both about the anticipated cuts and about the consultations with the UJC and JCCA.

"We don't know who is running the show, and meanwhile we don't know what to do July 1 when the money runs out," one regional BBYO leader said.

The expected cuts mean there will be "much more need for local fund raising," said another BBYO leader, Hal Polon, who chairs BBYO's New Jersey region.

"That's something we don't have enough experience with — and it's happened very quickly," Polon added.

Polon, whose region has received hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from the national office, said his board members are frantically trying to secure new funding by July 1.

"I'm not sure where it's going to shake out yet," he said. "It's a little bit of a scary time."

Nassau/Suffolk's Groman said that his region probably will be in the clear for the next few years.

But, he said, "Most regions are having much more trouble."

"We're one of the few that have had successful fund raising, so for at least the next year or two we'll survive," Groman said.

B'nai B'rith and BBYO's regional structures are not always conducive to easy fund raising. B'nai B'rith's 17 regions are not divided up the same way as BBYO's are — so BBYO regions do not always have a clear local partner in B'nai B'rith.

In addition, while some regions fall almost entirely in the domain of a large local federation, others, like New Jersey's, must approach several small federations if they want money.

It is not clear whether all BBYO regions will be able to cultivate new sources of support, or whether some will go belly up.

Arnie Weiner, the interim national director of BBYO and the longtime director of BBYO's Michigan region, said he would "like not to think" that BBYO could become extinct as a result of the anticipated cuts.

"I personally feel there's a lot of good feeling about BBYO," Weiner said. "The community is filled with alumni and parents who recognize what BBYO's done for their kids. That will hopefully end up with financial support. But I can't speak for every place. Some areas are going to be more challenged than others." □

## Rabbis ban cell phones in their yeshivas

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A group of fervently Orthodox rabbis in Israel has banned cell phones in their yeshivas, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The rabbis claimed in their directive that the ringing phones disturb Torah learning and "contradict the essence of the yeshiva" by allowing students unfettered access to the outside world. □



## Daily News Bulletin

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## JEWISH WORLD

### Edgar Bronfman reups at WJC

Billionaire philanthropist Edgar Bronfman said he would seek a fifth term as president of the World Jewish Congress with the goal of wrapping up restitution payments for Holocaust victims within a year.

Bronfman, who had expressed doubts about continuing at the helm of the worldwide umbrella organization, explained he has not trained or selected a successor, but would now begin grooming one in earnest.

### Hoax hits Canadian teachers

Teachers in Vernon, British Columbia, were victims of a hoax when they received videos denying the Holocaust that appeared to have been sent by B'nai Brith Canada.

Letters on fake B'nai Brith letterhead instructed teachers to show the videos during Holocaust Remembrance Day observances April 19, but the school board already had alerted teachers not to use the video.

A B'nai Brith official called the hoax "disgusting."

### Japanese leader clarifies remarks

Japan's economics minister said foreign media had misunderstood his remarks suggesting Japan try to become a nation where "rich Jews" would want to live.

"I only meant to say that those who have acquired wealth through talent and effort often encounter jealousy and injustice," Taro Aso said last Friday. "And I hope to make Japan a country where such people come to look for a chance."

A day earlier, speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, Aso said, "This might be arbitrary and biased, but I think the best country is one in which rich Jews feel like living."

Aso's apology followed criticism from the Anti-Defamation League, which said the remarks "reflect deep misperceptions and stereotypes of Jews and others."

### Terezin victims' names read

The names of 100 Jewish victims of the Terezin transit camp were read aloud last Friday in the Czech town as part of an annual ceremony commemorating some 35,000 Jews who died there between 1941 and 1945.

The event, which was held for the first time in 1991, will continue until the last of the 35,000 names are read out in the year 2340.

Also in Czechoslovakia, Israel's ambassador to the Czech Republic, Erelly Hadar, unveiled a plaque last Friday dedicated to Holocaust victims in the town of Tisnov.

In April 1942, two dozen local Jews were sent to their deaths in concentration camps.

## Former ambassador to Israel, Syria considered as Bush's Mideast envoy

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Contrary to its earlier declarations, the Bush administration is considering appointing a special Middle East envoy in the State Department to take some of the pressure off Secretary of State Colin Powell.

There is a growing feeling within the State Department that Powell has been spending too much time on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and needs a point person to handle the issue directly. The conflict "is not his personal interest," an Israeli official said of Powell. "He would like to have someone in his office who can address these issues when something comes up."

The position of Mideast envoy was eliminated after Dennis Ross left the State Department with the Clinton administration in January.

Arab leaders are believed to favor the appointment of a new envoy — seeing it as an indication of more intensive White House involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict — and have told Bush administration officials as much.

Bush has said he will take a more hands-off approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict than President Clinton.

State Department officials therefore are concerned that naming an envoy would create the impression of increased involvement, and may try to make statements clarifying Bush's continued low-key role before announcing any nomination.

Some officials have been designated for Middle East posts within the State Department but have not yet taken office.

Most department staff in Washington and Middle East capitals therefore are holdovers from the Clinton administration.

The appointment is not considered imminent.

Speculation about the appointment has focused on Edward Djerejian, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Syria.

Djerejian is closely associated with former Secretary of State James Baker, and now heads Baker's Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

Djerejian is respected by both Arabs and Israelis and would bring a balanced approach, Jewish leaders said, in keeping with the Bush administration's stated policies toward the Middle East.

Djerejian's Syria experience could be particularly useful, as the administration is cognizant of concerns in Syria and other Arab countries that decade-old sanctions harm the Iraqi population.

In a speech to the Foreign Press Center last week, Djerejian said the time may have come for the United States to reassess its Mideast policy. History shows that when presidents make decisive leadership decisions, significant developments in the region have followed, he said.

The administration should "structure the next phase of the negotiations along these lines in a more coherent and realistic regional framework which accommodates the interests of both sides and does not ignore popular opinion in both the Arab countries and Israel," Djerejian told the press center.

"At the end of the day, if there is to be peace in the Middle East, a viable and independent" Palestinian "state will have to emerge, living next to Israel in peace," he said. "The question is, how many more people have to die? How much longer does the tragedy have to continue before the parties can get back to the ultimate point to restart the negotiations?"

Djerejian's office at Rice University said he would not comment on the possible nomination.

The position of Mideast envoy was closed as part of a review of all such offices when Powell took over the State Department. Powell has said he prefers to use career foreign service officers rather than appointees from think tanks.

The State Department's Near East Affairs bureau has been handling Middle Eastern issues for the Bush administration.

A State Department spokesman said the agency is constantly reviewing how the Middle East situation can be handled internally, and that envoys play a useful role. He would not comment on speculation about an appointment. □

## Israeli Embassy in Budapest honors Jewish wartime heroine

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST (JTA) — Proud words and anguished tears marked a Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony here this week for a wartime Jewish heroine.

On April 19, as events were held around the world to remember the Holocaust, guests gathered at the Israeli Embassy for the unveiling of a plaque honoring Hannah Senesh.

Known better outside of Hungary than within, Senesh was a fighter with the Haganah, the leading Jewish fighting force before the creation of the Jewish state. She was tortured and killed by Hungarian fascists after parachuting into Nazi Europe in 1944.

The few surviving members of Senesh's family were among those attending the ceremony at the embassy.

Ivan Senesh, a 77-year-old cousin, said she had not died in vain.

"Her death has a symbolic meaning, which gives strength at those times when evil again raises its head," he said.

He later told JTA, "I hope that Hannah will be remembered in Hungary, because she sacrificed her life for Hungarians."

In Israel, her name became a symbol of devotion and self-sacrifice. But to this day, Senesh is not mentioned in Hungarian history books, and she is virtually unknown among most Hungarians, including the country's Jews.

In 1994, 50 years after her death, a square was named in Budapest in her honor.

Her name was inscribed on a small stone in the square, without any mention of who she was or what she did.

During the Communist regime, the only Jewish school in Budapest was named after another Jewish wartime heroine, Anne Frank.

Reeling under the impact of the anti-Semitism that prevailed in Budapest before World War II, Senesh became an ardent Zionist.

In September 1939, as the war began, she went to Palestine.

At the end of 1942, deeply concerned with the fate of European Jewry and of her mother in Budapest, she joined a group of parachutists organized by the Haganah to rescue Allied prisoners of war and organize Jewish resistance.

In March 1944, she parachuted into Yugoslavia. In June, when the Nazis were hastily deporting Hungarian Jews to death camps, she crossed into Hungary — and was soon arrested by Hungarian police.

Though tortured, she did not reveal any information about the Haganah.

She was executed by a firing squad in a Budapest military prison on Nov. 7, 1944, only a few weeks after the fascist Hungarian Arrow Cross Party took power in Hungary.

Her remains were taken to Israel in 1950.

Another speaker at last week's ceremony was 82-year-old Irene Sugar, who was Senesh's cellmate until the day a firing squad separated them.

She spoke of her memories of Senesh — but stopped when tears forced her to break off her story.

The black marble memorial tablet inaugurated in the embassy's central hall bears a simple inscription in Hebrew:

"The Hall of Hannah Senesh, May Her Memory be Blessed."

Next to the tablet was a photo of Senesh at the age of 18, when she was still a student at a Budapest high school. □

## Italy wants war criminal jailed; Germany promises to investigate

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) — Italy wants Germany to arrest and jail a 92-year-old former Nazi convicted of war crimes in Italy.

Friedrich Engel, the "butcher of Genoa," was convicted in absentia in Italy two years ago for having rounded up and killed nearly 250 civilians in northern Italy during World War II.

A German television station recently traced Engel to his home in Hamburg and broadcast an interview with him.

Since German law bars the extradition of a German citizen, Italy has called on Germany to arrest and jail Engel.

German officials said last week they would launch an investigation into the case.

Engel was the SS commandant and police chief in Genoa in 1944 and 1945. In 1999, a military tribunal in Turin tried him in absentia and sentenced him to life in prison for carrying out mass executions in four towns.

In all, 246 Italians were killed. Most of the victims were Italian partisans and political prisoners. They included 59 people executed by firing squad in Turchino in May 1944 in reprisal for a partisan attack at a movie house that killed six German soldiers.

In an interview published last week by the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, Engel admitted that he was "partially responsible" for these 59 deaths, but not the others.

"I didn't approve of the order" to kill them, the newspaper quoted him as saying. "But yes, I was present that day, but I could not oppose the execution." □

## AMIA blast 'victim' found alive; family members deny fraud charge

By Nicolas Penchaszadeh

BUENOS AIRES (JTA) — Is it a case of mistaken identity, or a carefully planned fraud?

The question surfaced after a spokesperson for the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires claimed last week that a presumed victim of the 1994 bombing of the center is alive and well, working as a baker in neighboring Paraguay.

Argentina's state-run news agency Telam reported that Patricio Irala, a Paraguayan man who allegedly had been hired by AMIA as a driver on the day of the bombing, was found in Paraguay's capital, Asuncion, by AMIA investigators.

Argentine officials have not yet found those responsible for the AMIA bombing, which killed 86 people and wounded about 300.

Following the attack, Irala's wife, Ema, claimed that the one unidentified body in the wreckage was her husband's.

AMIA says she collected some \$55,000 in compensation for his death, but she says she received only \$35,000.

AMIA lawyers claim that Irala and his wife committed fraud.

Ema Irala, however, denies the charge.

In a radio interview from her home in Asuncion, she said she had divorced Patricio and later married another man with the same name — and it was the second husband who died in the bombing.

Castorina Amarilla, the daughter of Ema and the man found alive in Paraguay, said in a radio interview that her father had never left Paraguay.

She also repeated her mother's claim. □